The Historical Novel in Oriya





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PREFACE

The historical novel constitutes one of the most neglected areas of study in Oriya literature. Very little effort has been made by scholars and critics of Oriya literature to relate the genesis and growth of this important literary form to significant intellectual and socio-cultural patterns. Critical discussion of the basic creative challenges involved in the writing of historical novels has been equally meagre, the manner in which writers of prose fiction in Oriya have responded to this in course of a century of the evolution of the historical novel has not been adequately defined.

The present monograph is prepared with the intention of making a modest contribution towards filling that critical void and to place the Oriya historical novel in proper perspective. Presumably the discussion made here with reference to Oriya historical novel will be seen to have a bearing on the growth of the historical novel in other Indian languages, too. This for two reasons: one, because of the close similarity of socio-cultural pressures on the different Indian literatures in the modern times, and second, because of their common literary ancestry. Thus, although the study does not include discussion on historical novel in, for instance, Bengali or Hindi, it is written with the belief that the arguments developed in the context of Oriya historical novel have a definite relevance to them.

It is significant that the first Oriya novels were historical romance, exhibiting a variety of approaches to

the problem of reconciling fact and fiction. It is only later that this dominant historical strain merged into a broad realistic tradition. But even then the fascination for drawing upon history for the subject matter of novels persisted and the fact-fiction amalgamation could be seen emerging in interesting variations of certain conventional patterns. Out of the large number of historical novels that have been written in course of a century, four major ones have been analysed here at some length in order to emphasize a certain evolving pattern in respect of the crucial problem of history-fiction synthesis.

The discovery of this pattern bring in the broader question of culture and its shaping influence on the literary tradition. The evolution of historical consciousness in Oriya society during the later half of the 19th century and the early decades of the 20th has been, therefore: discussed and an attempt has been made to relate this to the phenomenon of the growth of Oriya prose fiction. But, since the growth of historical consciousness in Orissa cannot be properly analysed unless one studies the nature of Western influence on morden Oriya mind, a preliminary discussion on the evolution of historical consciousness in the West has been incorporated.

The question of influence brings in the need for a comparative critical analysis. The rise of history in Europe and its relation to the rise of the historical novel provide the necessary conceptual frame-work for appreciating the evolution of Oriya historical novel. Therefore, the growth of the idea of history through different ages in European culture has been briefly discribed and its relevance for the rise of the historical novel has been indicated. Greater emphasis is laid on 19th century philosophical and literary tradition in the West because it produced what is known as the classical form of the historical novel. The achievement of Walter Scott had the

main focus because of his classical eminence as the most influential novelist in 19th century Europe, and also because he has been a seminal influence on historical novels in India. Attention has also been drawn to certain important features in major writers like Tolstoy and Fenimore Cooper and references have been made to the process of the decline of this form in Europe towards the end of the 19th century. Since Lukacs happens to be the major theoretician of the historical novel form in Europe he has often been referred to but an effort has been made to bring recent European criticism of the historical novel to bear upon the present discussion.

Points of difference between the pattern of the growth and decline of the historical novel in the 19th century Europe and the tradition of the Oriya historical novel highlight a number of interesting possibilities. The present study seeks to explore these possibilities and arrive at some conclusion.

The Historical Novel in Oriya : An Enquiry Into Premises and Patterns

A study of the tradition of English and continental prose-fiction would show that the difficulties inherent in an attempt to blend facts of history and fictive elements in a work of art have been very rarely overcome. It may be argued that novel as a form, from its very inception, has been oscillating between the extremes of fact and fiction. But this tension is seen at its most extreme in the realm of historical novels. Only a few novelists such as Walter Scott, Leo Tolstoy and Fenimore Cooper seem to have successfully reconciled the conflicting claims of fact and fiction in their novels. Such a thing is only natural, for in a historical novel the demands of reality and imagination are equally compelling. A similar difficulty may be seen to beset critics of historical novels too. If only a very few critics have ventured to offer a comprehensive study of this complex literary form it is because of their inability to resolve this problem. Except for Gyorg Lukacs and a few others, not many have succeeded in providing an adequate theoretical framework for the study and evalution of historical novels. The critical study of historical novels, therefore, continues to remain a challenging as well as fascinating task.

This is particularly so in case of Modern Indian prose-fiction which is largely the product of an interaction between the Western and the native traditions. Significantly enough, the first major nove slin most of the Indian languages happen to be historical romances. Later, this preoccupation with historical themes gives way to a predilection for realistic portrayal of contempo-

rary social life. But the historical strain never really gets obliterated in fact, it continues to be an important dimension of the modern tradition in Indian literature. This phenomenon holds the possibility of a rewarding comparative study of the literary traditions in the East and the West as they are available in historical novels. This will also open up new perspectives on the growth and development of the modern tradition in Indian literatures. A picture of the emergence of the historical novel in Europe against the background of the evolution of historical consciousness provides the necessary conceptual framework for such an investigation. Thus, an enquiry into the tradition of historical novels in Oriya would naturally need the support of a framework.

The Idea Of History as a Factor In The Rise Of The Novel

To understand the nature of the historical novel as an art-form it is necessary to investigate into the complex relation between values of literature and history, a subject that has continued to interest critics from the time of Aristotle. It has been assumed that literature and history represent two distinct modes of perceiving reality. Aristotle suggests an absolute distinction between the two : history deals with the possible, a set of events which have actually occured, while poetry is concerned with the probable, history with the particular, and poetry with the universal. Aristotle's conception of history, however, does not represent the Greek view. The works of the earliest Greek historians Herodotus and Thucidydes show the two divergent, major approaches to history available in ancient Greece. For Herodotus history is a sequence of particular events which happened in the past. The order in which they have been arranged is not meant to bring out their relative significance and it does not stress the relation among events. Perhaps, Aristotle has this kind of an attitude towards the past while making the distinction between poetry and history. On the other hand, for Thucidydes, events are seen rather as aspects of a process[1]. The operation of this process can only be apprehended by perceiving the relations among events, not merely by taking note of the order in which they happened. Thus, by imposing a pattern on specific events of the past, the historian obtains an insight into

1. John H. Finley, Jr. Four Stages of Greek Thought, Stanford University Press, 1966. P--76.

some guiding scheme which, human nature being constant, recurs. The particular and the universal are reconciled in Thucidydes' idea of history by its being conceived as part of a larger process.

Renaissance revived this debate. When the artist was confronted with the task of explaining and projecting the experience of profound changes in a number of spheres, he sought suitable themes as well as illustration in the process of history. This is not to say that Mediaeval Europe lacked a sense of history. Christian theology, like Greek history, adumbrated a linear concept of time and gave rise to special historical visions in respect of specific national cultures. The Christian community inherited the sense of history as a purposeful allegory, a peocess that leads to the Day of Jugdement. It considers God to be the origin of history, as also its point of dissolution. Renaissance replaced this theological view of history by a more secular one, its importance for the age lay in its political significance, a fact which is reflected in the thinking of Machiavelli, Baudein and Robertello. The lessons to be learnt from the past became a major concern of a progressive culture which was slowly divesting itself of the old forms ot authority and was looking forward to a glorious, humanistic future.

Although writers like Sidney continued to reiterate the Aristotelian conception of history the consciousness of the 'uses of history' made the Renaissance historian keep on interpreting the past. A distinction between chronicle and history proper thus began to take shape.

> History proper came to be recognised as a continuous, selected and integrated narrative and to be distinguished from mere records of fact such as annals. Truth was universally reckoned the objective of the historian and impartiality the most necessary of virtues[1].

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1. Lily B. Campbell, Shakespeare's Histories, Mathuen 1947, P—21.

By recognising the identity of history as a kind of narrative which imposes a certain form on events Renaissance historiography was, in fact, emphasising the literary possibilities of history. As in works of art, the events on such an assumption reveal their meaning through the form which brings out the relations among them. History, thus, can be meaningful only as a definite structure, and can attain the completeness and integration which Aristotle requires of a work of art.

The period of Renaissance witnessed a phenomenal growth of historical drama. A similar development also took place in ancient Greece when Greek culture lost its mythical orientation and became historicised. The Renaissance dramatists turned to the past in search of subject-matter for their plays and exploited whatever sources of historical material were then available. The predilection can be explained with reference to a number of factors. The new historical consciousness, it may be remembered, comprised three basic components, the centrality of man who makes history, the relevance of the past for the present, and the rise of the nation-states. The writing of historical drama in England coincided with a moment of intense national self-consciousness[1]. In consequence, literature responded to the need for glorifying the past and emphasising the relavance of past events to present needs. The historical plays written by Shakespeare, however, seem to serve a much more complex function. The issue as to whether Shakespeare was merely reflecting the dominant assumptions of the Elizabethan world in his historical plays is still being vigorously debated. But it can be easily seen that, taken together they convey a sense of history as a tragic

1. Herbert Lindenberger, Historical Drama. The University of Chicago Press, 1975, P-6.

process[2]. These plays constitute a historical epic, covering a hundred years of conflict for the British crown. To Shakespeare, these struggles among individuals illuminate the conflict of grand forces which shape individual destinies. While his contemporary Jonson used history as a background and employed the past often as a justification for the present, Shakespeare used history itself as a major protagonist in his plays.

This is not to say that, in Renaissance Europe the broad attitude as reflected in chronicle history was completely replaced by the notion of history as a process. On the other hand, history as a body of established facts remained a part of the Renaissance consciousness. The literature of the Renaissance manifests an extraordinary degree of self-consciousness which expresses itself in the frequent use of the theatre metaphor by the artists. The artist's growing awareness of the fictive character of the world he created often made him turn to history in order to give this world a greater density. This tension between the attempt to organise a closed world of art and historical reality remains a characteristic of all works of art which seek to structure historical reality in a literary form. Lindenberger discerns some such tension in Jonson's historical plays :

> Jonson's often pedantic display of learning, coupled as it is with the transformations to which he subjected his material, illustrates in an extreme way a phenomenon, characteristic of historical dramatists of most eras : on the one hand, the pretense that they are rendering historical realities as such, on the other hand, an acknowledge-

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1. Jan Kott, Shakespeare Our Contemporary, Methuen, 1967, P-5.

ment that a play creates its own world with a closed internal system of references[1].

As novel replaces drama as the central literary form this tension between empirical reality and autonomy of art is much more extensively and self-consciously projected by the novelists. The importance of the major historical novels of the 19th century is partly to be suggested in terms of the relative degree of success they achieved in resolving this tension.

The sense of history which could give Renaissance drama, particularly Elezabethan drama in England, a new content also led to the decline of some major art-forms, namely,heroic romance, allegory and the pastoral. On closer scrutiny, it will be seen that the literary impulses behind these art-forms are antagonistic to the growth of historical consciousness. But, before analysing the nature of these impulses it is necessary to isolate the assumptions underpinning a historical conception of life. Its main axiom is that reality is empirical and that it is patterned by a process of causality. Time in the historical conception of life is conceived as a stream in which cause always precedes effect. In other words, such a conception of life views the phenomenon of human development as real, and considers this to be dynamic and fluxional. It does not view temporal and spatial reality under the aspect of eternity. Since tension and conflict, and their resolution, are the mainstay of the dramatic form, it is easy to see why the historical consciousness could be so readily assimilated into Elizabethan drama.

From this point of view it may be argued that forms such as romance, pastoral and allegory are essenti-

1. Herbert Lindenberger, Historical Drama, University of Chicago Press, 1975, P-4.

ally anti-historical. They are primarily concerned with projecting a vision of reality which is static, timeless and one that is unaffected by the pressures of ordinary life. Each one of these forms tends to reject the world of ordinary life that is bound by space and time in favour of either a 'golden age' or a 'higher reality'. A discussion of the properties of these forms would show that their decay was inevitable under the impact of a growing concern with history and empirical reality. Most romances have these features in common : themes of love and adventure, a certain withdrawal from their own societies on the part of both the reader and the romance hero, profuse sensuous details, simplified characters, a happy ending, amplitude of proportions and a strong enforced code of conduct to which all the characters must comply. What strikes one most here is the quality of its pattern of wishfulfilment, its shirking of all obligations to real life. It is no wonder that in the eighteenth century its 'irrationality' and distance from everyday life became the main point of criticism[1].

Unlike romance, allegory does not of course, withdraw from the world of ordinary life. But it seeks to transcend the world of empirical reality by treating it as a system of symbols suggesting some 'higher reality' above time and place. The particulars became the symbols of a transcedent universal and cease to be important or meaningful in themselves. Neither art nor history recommend such a distancing of life lived within the bounds of time and space. The old allegorical conception of reality had significant bearings on the image of man. While the romances presented an image which was idealised out of all proportions, allegory treated him as 'Every man'. In both the cases man as an individual occupying a particular point in space and time and having a sense of his own

1. Gillian Beer, Romance, Methuen, 1970. P.39 59.

separateness was just not recognised. Neither the romance hero nor the 'Everyman' of the allegories was the man who made 'history' since both stood outside time and space.

Pastoral represents yet another mode of escaping work-a-day life and moving into an uncomplicated world of innocence. In its own characteristic way it rejects the processes of change and creates a changeless world, untouched by the complexities of life in time. It is yet another stylization intended to express a protest against change, decay and complexity. It romanticises simplicity and functions as an implicit comment upon the tensions generated by change and progress. Literary history offers examples of the artist's attempt to retreat from the realm of human reality into the supposedly benign, deathless and permanent world of nature, the pastoral literature created during the Renaissance shows a great deal of self-consciousness. As a fundamental literary impulse it continued to remain a significant component of literary experience but as an art form it showed signs of strain on account of the pressure of contemporay reality. Raymond Williams talks about a 'counter pastoral' vein in Elizabethan pastoral poetry and demonstrates how knowledge of crises of contemporary life made the portrayal of an Arcadian innocence difficult. He observes that 'Arcadia' of Sidney is a self-conscious attempt to recreate through art the image of the idyllic village which was decaying fast under the new system of 'enclosure' in Elizabethan England.

The withering away of these art-forms prepared the ground for the emergence of an important, new art-form. The evolution of novel as an independent genre has coincided with the growing concern with realism and the decline of art-forms which were characterised their distance from ordinary life. Novel criticism has recogni-

sed two major determinants of this change, decay of aristocracy leading to the emergence of a new reading public[1], and the growth of a new conception of reality[2]. Romance was predominantly an aristocratic art-form and it sought to poject an idealised image of life. It addressed itself to most necessary men, was constructed on an antiquated psychology and appealed to an audience which felt that the representation of things as they are should be confined to comedy and anti-romance.[3] Far-reaching changes in the social structure necessitated a certain readjustment in the hierarchy and led to the rise of a mercantile class. Rise of this class altered the composition of the reading public. Their intense preoccupation with everyday realities, trade and commerce made them stress the importance of things as they are and reject the art-forms designed to create, gratifying illusions for the consumption of a leisure-class which did not have to earn its living.

The stress upon things as they are as against fantastic fictional worlds obviously signified a radically different notion of reality. From the point of view of the new middle class, it may be described as a vindication of ordinary life, commonsense and rationality. But it has major implications at the metaphysical level, too. Reality in medieval philosophy consisted of universals: medieval allegorical literature ignored specific attributes and event, and sought to reach a timeless and spaceless essence by transcending 'particulars'. Man as an individual was, naturally, absent in such a scheme of things.

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1. Arnold Kettle, Introduction to the Novel, Vol 1, London 1951, P.11-25.
2. Ian Watt, Rise of the Novel.
3. Joan Williams, Novel and Romance, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970, P-5.

Even in its painting and architecture medieval christianity emphasised the nothingness of man in relation to the concept of a reality as consisting of the 'particulars'. This also implies that man would now be conceived of as an individual occupying a point in time and space, and not only as a token of divine reality. Such a fundamental change in the conceptions of reality and man revolutionised the artist's perception of life and established change as a domincnt facet of consciousness and as a major concern of art. Spengler describes this turning-point as 'Western man's alliance with time' and considers novel to be the product of such an alliance.

It must be admitted that such an oversimplification of a complex process of the evolution of a new art-form may be quite misleading. But what is being emphasised here is that the novel is the product of two aspects in the tradition brought into being by the Renaissance : realism and individualism. The first impulse initially manifested itself as a reaction against the tradition of heroic romance and emphasised the need for the portrayal in literature of the writer's experience of contemporary reality and expected it to conform to the standards of probability. Don Quixote presents the classic illustration. Designed as an antidote to the illusions forstered by romance and its irrationality, it finally emerges as the prototype of the novel-form[1]. It portrays the tension between the ideal and the actual, illusion and reality: fancy and commonsense, from a complex, dual perspective : everyday reality qualifies and exposes the imagined world and imagination reveals the limitations and commonplaceness of ordinary life. The structure of Don Quixote is designed upon the journey of an individual who pursues his ideal in the world of everyday reality, and

1. Lionel Trilling, Liberal Imagination, Anchor Books, New York, 1953, P.199-215.

returns to it at the end, embittered and broken-hearted. It is significant that Cervantes described his work as 'historia', which in Spanish means both a ' story ' and a 'history'. The idea of the novelist as the historian of contemporary reality might be incipient in such a description[1].

The picaresque novels which came to be written in the seventeenth and eigthteenth centuries register their protest against the idealised and aristocratic world of romances. These novels are organised around the experiences of its protagonist, 'the picaro', the rogue who undertakes a journey, spurns the values of the feudal society, flouts its code of conduct, and attacks its institutions. Arnold Kettle rightly sees in it the attitude of a nascent middle class which has not formed its own values but which refuses to accept feudal morality. By the time of Richardson, however, the English novel seems to have acquired its moral certainties. What is more important is that while negating the feudal values the novelists presented a realistic picture of contemporary society through the variegated experiences of its foot-loose protagonist. This is merely to emphasise the novel's commitment to emperical reality and the novelist's awareness of his role as the historian of contemporary society. In fact, Fielding speaks of novelists as 'historical writers who donot draw their materials from records[3]. But their conception of history was certainly that of a record of events and the artist as historian was not anything more than an observer of contemporary reality with a keen moral sense.

The artist's enhanced pre-occupation with empirical reality in itself fails to give any clear idea of the

1. Gillian Beer, Romance, Methuen. 1970

2. Henry Fielding, Tom Jones, Book X Chap.1

novel-form. To say that it was the comedy of romance or anti-romance is obviously not an adequate explanation. Critics like Lukacs and Ian Watt seek to identity the historical conditions which led to the rise of the novel. The rejection of romance and other art-forms may be taken as symptoms of this process, not its cause. Both Lukacs and Ian Watt take the individual's alienation from his community to be the most significant factor underlying the phenomenon of the rise of the novel. Ian Watt sees in Defoe's Robinson Crusoe the beginnings of the English novel. As he views it, at the heart of Renaissance Humanism there lay the assumption of the existence of the 'isolated economic man' and the endeavour of this man to create a self-sufficient alternative order of reality for himself gave the novel its characteristic form. To put it in another way, the novel grew out of the awareness of the dichotomy between the individual and the society, a disintegration of the harmonious, stable system of relations which sustained the medieval society.

Gyorg Lukacs seeks to build a theory of the novel on the basis of this alienation of the individual from the society and his search for wholeness. He elaborately discusses the emergence of the novel as the epic of an age in which the 'extensive totality' of life is no longer directly given, in which the immanence of meaning in life has become a problem, and which yet thinks in terms of totality[1]. Epic, according to Lukacs, is the art-form of undifferentiated societies in which a sense of unity between the individual and the environment is a reality, and in which myth and history, the ideal and the actual, do not represent separate planes of reality. Tragedy dramatises a conflict between the protagonist and an

1. Graham Wood, Lukacs' Theory of the Novel, Novel Vol-6, No-2, Winter, 1973, P-176

incompatible outer reality. The tragic hero is distinguished from the epic hero by his isolation. The novel, which for Hegel and Lukacs is the epic of a Godless society, portrays neither this totality nor the conflict. It is organised around the search for such a totality This search is embodied in the psychology of the novel's heroes they are the 'seeker'. This gives the novel what is for Lukacs the abstract and imposed form of biography: the life story of a single, separate individual.

Two major implications of Lukacs formulations are relevant to the present discussion on the relation between literature and history. The first is that the novel grows out of the separation of myth and history and embodies a quest for wholeness. The reality it seeks to delineate is ambivalent and does not reveal its meaning as does myth. The second implication of his theory is that the novel is an epic of an unstable society in a state of flux, not held together by an organic unity between man and the universe. In his Historical Novel Lukacs would examine, this contention in depth. It may be mentioned here that for the novelists this was not a conscious process. These conceptual schemes are helpful in giving a coherent account of the rise of the novel and its relation to the growing sense of history.

The turning away from the static, timeless world of romance, allegory and pastoral does not imply that the novelists conceived of reality as a process. On the other hand, the great social novels in England in the eighteenth century explored the individual's changing relationship to contemporary reality which for them remained more or less static. Their attitude towards the changes at the level of empirical reality, too, must not be confused with the 19th century view of reality as a process of continuous change, a view that refused to recognise any immutable reality above or outside this

process. Time in these novels consists of the past and the present of the individuals, not of the society with which they interact. The 18th century novelists certainly moved from the nation of a 'higher' reality to a 'human', empirical reality, but it would be wrong to say that they took reality to be evolving constantly from one form into another. In other words, they did not view changes on the plane of human reality as constituting a process. Their approch to society, man and reality as a whole was a historical. The particulars were, again, seen under aspect of a universal. The universal in the case of the 18th century novel is a general theory of human nature which is supposed to remain constant in the midst of change and the distinctions of time and place make no difference to its body of values. Fielding's claim in Tom-Jones that his lawyer had remained unaltered through the last four thousand years is supported by such an assumption,

It may be recalled that a belief in the unchanging fundamentals of human nature characterises Thucidydes' conception of history. Since human nature remains basically the same. Thucidydes argues, the 'guiding-scheme' which historical events illustrate is bound to recur. In the 'humanist' view of history, too, stress is laid upon the constancy of human nature. 18th century historical thought is marked by the growth of that is known as the tradition of philosophical theory. The assumption of that human nature is unalterable and universal is also at the centre of this tradition. Influenced by the success of contemporary science which succeeded in offering universal laws to explain phyisical phenomena, eighteenth century historical thought aspired to achieve something similar in the realm of historical understanding. Philosophical history in the 18th century was characterised by a belief in the basic constancy of human nature, with historical change appearing in the guise of a

struggle between the opposing forces of reason and unreason and with the value of history attributed not so much to its provision of a record of objective events as to its ability to tell us about the historical agent, man, himself. It is man who makes history in the sense of bringing about changes in his environment, but his essential nature remains unaffected by these changes, To be more precise, these changes are not qualitative, appearing in the guise of a struggle between the opposing forces of reason and unreason, and with the value of history attributed not so much to its provision of a record of objective events as to its ability to tell us about the historical agent, man, himself[1]. It is man who makes history in the sense of bringing about changes in his environment, but his essential nature remains unaffected by the ahanges. To be more precise, these changes are not qualitative.

One must not, however, overlook the complexities inherent in the historical thought of a whole century. It is true that Neo-classicism in literature and philosophical history in historical thought remained the dominant intellectual formal view-points through most part of the eighteenth century. But, of course, they were vigorously challenged by counter-point traditions. The Ancient Modern controversy of Italian Renaissance which was reenacted in England in the latter half of the Seventeeth century and continued well into the early decades of eighteenth century gave clear evidence of the gradual emergence of a new historical outlook. In Vico and Herder we witness a crystallization of this new outlook. In their approach to the problem of understanding history known as 'aesthetic historism' they

1. Alan Megill, 'Aesthetic Theory and Historical Concinousness in the 18th Century History and Theory, Vol-17, No, 1, 1978, P-30

controverted the assumptions of the Enlightenment historians, their universalist categories and their belief in the constancy of human nature. Though their break with the Enlightenment is not as sharp as was to be the case with nineteenth century Historicism they certainly offer a conception of history which differs fundamentally from the 'mainstream' tradition of historical thought in the Eighteenth Century.

The main contribution of Vico and Herder to historical understanding consists in their concept of the past. Both of them recognise the otherness of the past and stress the need for a contextual, relativestic mode of evaluation of earlier societies. They do not believe that the past is explicable in terms that are valid as interpretative tools for analysis of the present. In doing so they reject the Neo-Classical idea of the basic constancy of human nature. Vico's fundamental interpretative value lies in his assertion that the history of the 'obscure times' can be interpreted only if we understand the human nature of that time. Herder, too, insists repeatedly on the need of judging historical objects in their specific contexts. It is clear that for both of them history consists of a series of contexts which are qualitatively different from each other, not in changes which show the same principle in operation all through. But this does not imply that these contexts stand in complete isolation and demand analysis on their own special terms. They form parts of a reality which for Vico and Herder represents a continuously evolving process. In Herder's view the historical moment doesnot exist in isolation but is rather linked with the moments that precede and follow it. Such a conception of reality as dynamic is central to the historical consciousness which came to dominate thinking in the Nineteenth century.

Nineteenth century in Europe was characterised by two remarkable events of great cultural significance:

the rise of historicism and the rise of the historical novel. It is tempting to treat the latter as the product of the former. But that would be a hasty equation. Though a certain correspondence between the intellectual climate of a period and its cultural products may always be discerned, the influence of abstract ideas on literature does not involve such a simple process. To Vico, Herder and the philosophical historians in the Eighteenth century, cultural development meant moving from primitivism to high civilization. Movement and progress of human society had become almost axiomatic formulations of historical thinking. But the experience of the French Revolution forced upon European consciousness the recognition of the fact of change as a relentless—often violent—process, one which suddenly erupts and transforms a whole society. The French Rovolution, it has been said, made history a mass-experience. Until now, history was not more than an abstract assumption of forces operating imperceptibly on a set of events that were interesting for having occured in the remote past. It also signified the complete distruction of an old order and the birth of an entirely new order out of its ruins. Thus change as the basic principle of existence compelled recognition. The forces that brought this about had to be adequately explained. The sense of history thus acquired a new dimension. History as a set of forces now implies necessity.

Hegel and, later, Marx sought to explain history in terms of necessity. They, for the first time, introduced the concept of 'Universal history' or world history in place of different parallel histories, political social or cultural. For Hegel, the continuous thread is political history, whereas for Marx it is economic history. In Hegel's view, history is a relentless yet meaningful process which fulfils its objective tasks. The continuous conflict between thesis and anti-thesis generating a new synthesis is the underlying principle of this dialectical

movement. Hegel postulates a stage at which all contradictions are reconciled and the synthesis thus formed does not generate fresh contradictions. Hegel distinguished between 'world-historical' individuals who seek 'satisfaction' and 'world-maintaining' individuals who seek happiness[1]. The great man or the 'world-historical' individual in Hegel's opinion, is not the product of material conditions but is primarily an expression of the spirit of his times. As culture develops, certain objective needs arise which fulfil themselves through the subjective decisions of men.

A metaphysical impulse is very much discenible in Hegel's formulations on the nature of the historical process. The drama of history unfolds itself under the tutelage of an 'absolute mind' that is in the process of becoming self-conscious. Such abstract ideas were challenged by a number of critics. But for purposes of the present discussion the importance of Hegel lies in his emphasis on conflict and contradictions, his conception of history as necessity, as a set of forces which fulfil themselves through actions of individuals who may or may not be aware of them. Marx, on the other hand, shifts his emphasis from the idealist orientation of Hegel's philosophy of history to a materialist conception of history. The process of history in the Marxian view, is set into motion by the contradiction between forces of production and the production relations among men. He thinks of the evolution of human society in terms of distinct stages and each stage grows out of the preceding one as a result of the contradiction mentioned earlier. Though Marx interprets history in terms of necessity, unlike Hegel, he does not explain this necessity, by reference to an abstraction as that of the world-spirit becoming self-conscious. History, for Marx, is a

1. Lindenberger, Historical Drama, University of Chicago Press, 1975

continuous process, ridden with conflicts and contradictions. But it is men who make history while producing the means of their subsistence. This essentially humanist character of Marx's view of history surfaces in some of his statements in 'German Ideology'.

> "The first premise of all human history is the existence of living human individuals x x x In history upto the present it is certainly likewise an empirical fact that separate individuals herewith the broadening of their activity into world-historical activity become more and more enslaved under a power alien to them"[1].

But, again, as in Hegel, continuous conflict and the inevitable supersession of one order by another characterise the Marxian philosophy of history. The assumption underlying Hegelian and Marxian views of history would provide a critic like Gyorg Lukacs with important tools to analyse the development of the historical novel.

Mention may be made here of Carlyle whose view of history contrasts sharply with that of Hegel and Marx while Marx and Hegel see in different stages of history the resultant of forces which work themselves out through conflict, Carlyle sees history as a record of the actions of heroic individuals. Hegel's world-historical individuals are important in that they express the spirit of their time, but not in themselves. But Carlyle's heroes are the agents of history, not its instruments. His exaggerated claims for his heroes are an indication of the growing need for explaining the role of the individual in history.

This change in the conception of reality after the French Revolution has been summed up by R. G. Coll-

1. Marx and Engels, German Ideology, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1976, P-55

ingwood as the 'rise of history': History he says' began to gain the status enjoyed by physical science in the 18th century.

"The really new element in the thought of today as compared with that of three centuries ago is the rise of history. x x x Thus history occupies in the world today a position analogous to that occupied by physics in the time of Locke. it is recognised as a special and autonomous form of thought, lately established whose possibilities have not yet been completely explored. And just as in the 17th and 18th centuries there were materialists who argued from the success of physics in its own sphere that all reality was physical, so among ourselves the success of history has led some people to suggest that its methods are applicable to all the problems of knowledge; in otherwords that all reality is historical x x x. Since the time of Heraclitus and Plato it has been a common place that things, natural no less than things human are in constant change and that the entire world of nature is a world of process or becoming. But this is not what is meant by the historicity of things, for 'change' and 'history' are not at all same. According to this old established conception, the specific form of natural things constitute a changeless repertory of fixed types and the process of nature is a process by which instances of these forms x x x come into existence and pass out of it again. Now, in human affairs as historical research has clearly demonstrated by the 18th century, there is no such fixed repertory of specific forms. Here the process of becoming was already by that time recognised as involving

not only the instances or quasi-instances but the forms themselves.[1]

The changes in the idea of history have a direct bearing upon the growth of the novel-form which, in a sense, is the product of the growth of historical consciousness in Europe. The conception of reality of a particular culture is closely bound up with its concept of history, Any change in the concept of history would naturally indicate an altered conception of reality. Historical novels which seek to express historical reality through the medium of the novel-form would certainly reflect these changing conceptions of reality and history. A fully realised historical novel. thus differs from romance, allegory and pseudo-historical novels not in terms of the 'quantity' of historical facts it contains but on a fundamentally different outlook on reality itself. It is clear from the above discussion that in nineteenth century reality came to be conceived of as historical, as a continuously changing process. It is necessary to bear in mind the various facets of this evolving histotical consciousness while seeking to understand the rise of the historical novel in the nineteenth century for a proper appreciation of the form. It will be seen that the prestige the genre of historical novel enjoyed and the consummation it achieved are inextricably associated with the specific consciousness of history which is characteristic of the nineteenth century mind. Interestingly enough, it will also be seen that a decline in the belief in historicism in the modern times has led to the gradual decay and supperanuation of the classical form of the historical novel.

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1. R. G. Collingwood, Human Nature and Human History, The Philosophy of History, Patrick Gardiner (ed), Oxford University Press, 1974, P 20-22

Rise of the Historical Novel

Walter Scott was writing his historical novels set in the English and the Scottish past—at a time when historical thought was undergoing significant transformations. There was in evidence a powerful current sweeping the world of novels: the impulse towards artistic reorganisation of the past was already manifest in the Gothic novels. Towards the end of the 18th century more and more novelists turned to the past and chose backgrounds and characters that were exotic and remote in time. In these Gothic romances the drama of individual characters was merely transferred to a remote past. While their feelings and responses were still those of average eighteenth century men, they derived their appeal from being placed against a romantic, hazy exotic background. Here history is used as costumery, as an immobile background which does not alter the characters' response to reality, and is there to facilitate a retreat into the past for the sake of its romantic appeal. This was merely indicative of the growing tendency of the creative minds to nostalgically recreate an enchanting past because the present was becoming unendurable. Romantic medie valism was to throw this tendency into sharp relief.

Scott has been usually treated as a writer of historical romances. It is only recently that critics like David Daiches and Gyorg Lukacs have established the status of Scott as a major historical novelist, as one who has given historical novel its 'classical form'[1] But it must be remembered that Scott's writings inspired a whole gene-

1. Gyorg Lukacs, Historical Novel, Merlin Press, London 1970, Ch-1

ration of writers who attempted to fuse historical details with romantic tales of love and adventure. Ninteenth century reviewers were quick to grasp the difference between Scott and his less talented imitators but continued to admire Scott for making history alive. The comments of an irate reviewer may be seen:

> "The Romance of history is an exhausted vain of writing from which the ore has long disappeared. In the hands of its master, Sir Walter Scott, the historical novel was a work of art equally with the histories of Shakespeare. Sir Walter put life in the narrowless bones and lit up once more the light in eyes of old skeleton traditions x x x After Scott's success, the historical novel becomes a fashion and like all the fashions of the world soon passes away x x x Romances were written to order: The annals of all nation were ransacked to furnish a plot and story[1]."

He then turns to the limitation of the historical romance—

> "x x x history is better learned from other sources. Besides, the facts must be altered or suppressed to suit the demands of the story. What is good, the proper humanity of the novel, is interrupted by the historical machinery.[2]

These serve to indicate that while Scott was admired by his contemporaries for having animated the dead facts of history: they also believed that history and the novel should remain distinct.

It would be seen that in his major novels Scott's attitude towards the past does not involve an escaape from contemporary reality. Nor does the turn to the past

1 and 2. George Dekker and J. P. M Williams (ed) Fenimore Cooper, The Critical Heritage, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973, P 201-203

to evoke a sense of mystery for its own sake. He had certainly imbibed a sense of history as a process which found expression in his waverley novels. These novels do not merely deal with the past realities, they rather seek to explore the past with the intention of establishing a vital link with the present. Before Scott historical details were more a hindrance than help for imaginative artists for it placed constraints on free creativity. Such an attitude transforms the past from a set of events into a stage in a continuing process, into the prehistory of the present. Scort's novels fall into three classes on the basis of their treatment of the past : stories of English history set in the Judor-Stuart period, stories of English and European history set in the Middle Ages, and stories of the Scottish past and the near present. Modern critics have appreciated the remarkable success achieved by Scott in novels that deal with the recent past. This is because in these novels Scott succeeds in depicting the past as the 'necessary pre-history of the present'[1].

The shaping influence on Scott's mind have to be examined in order to place in proper perspective his success in treating the past as a stage in an on-going process. Lukacs argues that it was the experience of the French Revolution which inspired Scott to convey a sense of the historical process in his novels. But it is well known that Scott had a conservative outlook and his being influenced by the radical ideas generated by the French Revolution as deeply as Lukacs believes he was, seems rather unlikely. The influences which might have shaped his outlook on history should rather be looked for in his native Scottish tradition. Scotland in the 18th century was in a state of turmoil. One of the most notable events to which one might refer was the

1. D. D. Devlid, Scott and History, The Author of Waverley. A Critical Study, Mac Millan, 1971, P-43

Jacobite rebellion which affected both Lowland Scotland and England-this produced a profound cultural shock. In addition, the influence of the tradition of philosophical history on the Scotland of the late Eighteenth and early Nineteenth centuries is evident in three main areas. First, the idea that society has historically developed, through distinct stages, each of which has had certain corresponding effects on matters as diverse as men's manners and their political institutions began to gain ground. A feeling for determinism, and the idea of inexorable progress being made through often unconscious or blind actions of the people, dominated the thinking of the time. A feeling for relativsm, which consisted in the attempt to evaluate historical societies without debasing them through handsight altered the prevailing attitudes towards the past[1]. But, whereas the philosophical historians concerned themselves primarily with the past as an abstraction, as a matter for theoretical discussion, Scotr's main endeavour was to imaginatively recreate the experience of living human beings of the past societies who made, and were shaped by, history. Scott's distinct view of history issues as a resultant of the interaction between his conservative out-look and his views of history as a process of conflict and change leading to progress. He is said to have chosen a typically 'Ehglish' middle course between the extremes of complete historicism and change. He finds in English history the consolation that the most violent vicissitudes of class struggle have always finally calmed down into a 'glorious middle way'.

The organisation of Scott's historical novels is fundamentally affected by this sense of history as a process of conflict which transforms a whole society.

1. David Brown, Walter Scott and the Historical Imagination, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979, P-198.

His novels deal with great historical collisions, points at which vast forces clash and new orders are born out of the ruins of the old, These conflicts as they are portrayed in Scott's novels exist simultanously on two planes : historical and personal, The crises of history are translated into concrete human terms by being presented in terms of conflicts between groups of human beings, Plot in novels before Scott was organised mainly on the basis of the encounter of a protagonist with other individuals, or with the values of the society as a whole, But the conflict which is at the centre of Scott's historical novels has vast dimensions and its function is to show a whole society in motion, Through the ups and downs of individual lives is portrayed the changing destiny of a whole society in transition. But the drama of individual destinies does not thereby lose its intensity of appeal. In the specific context of Scott's Waverelcy series, the plot is centred round conflicts which divide people into antagonistic groups and ends in the decline of some one order. It dramatises the destruction of the Scottish clans and feudal institutions and the emergence of a mercenary culture, Scott often concentrates events and allows opposing forces to collide with each other through a confrontation between individuals and groups and does not simply narrate the events. The affinities of his plot construction with drama have this deeper thematic implication.

This kind of plot-construction is a distinguishing characteristic of novels written in the tradition of Scott. Fenimore Cooper. who was a contemporary of Scott. similarly depicted in his novels the conflict between the Gentile society of the Red Indians andthe colonising Europeans. The central conflict is ultimately one between two systems of values : the values of a tribal society where the community bonds are very strong and those of a commercial, acquisitive society which cherishes the ethic of individualism, But the conflict is not presented

in the abstract, It is made an integral part of the lived experience of actual human being who love, hate, acquire goods and destroy each other, without being aware of the nature of the larger process subtly shaping their destiny, A few years later, Tolstoy, would choose such a grand historical conflicr as the structural basis of his monumental novel, 'War and Peace'. He. too, would make this conflict a part of the lived experience of individual characters.

It is, therefore, natural that in the historical novels of Scott the Scope for a predominantly humanist approach to characterisation is rather limited. The concept of the free individual shaping his destiny by tackling a refractory environment constitutes the controlling element of novels that came to be written after the Renaissance. Most of these novels sought to illustrate through the actions of individual characters a general principle of human nature and characters were divided into groups on the basis of the author's moral values or those of the society. This morality is an ahistorical absolute and sociai transformation does not affect its quality when reality itself whould be conceived of as a process and events would be taken to be its distinct but related phases the novelist would find it difficult to treat characters out side the circumstances of this historical process. The moral categories themselves will form a part of the flux of history. This is not to say that characters in classical historical novels lose their identities as human beings and become pawns on the vast chessboard of history. It may be urged that characterisation in historical novels stand somewhere between that of the realistic novels which grant the individual a large measure of autonomy in his interaction with the environment and that of the naturalistic novels which show human beings as completely dominated by their environment. The characters in the classical historical novels are presented as credible

rounded human beings, possessed of distinct individuality. But they never draw attention upon themselves as they do in a novel in the realistic tradition. This is because they also function as instruments of history.

It deserves to be noted that an awareness of relativism constitutes a major strand of the historicism which Scott inherited from the Scottish philosophical historians, This sense of relativism consists in the belief that no absolute standard can be set for evaluating different phases in human development. It is unfair to pass moral judgement on characters who lived in a age different from the novelists own and had a different way of looking at life. The conflict he seeks to dramatise is a historical one, one that is, neither metaphysical nor moral. David Daiches points out that Scott has no historical villains. There are no characters in Scott's novels who are wicked because they belong to a particular side in a historical conflict. People can be trapped by history on one side or the other; again and again Scott shows with persuasive clarity how people who are essentially friendly can be manoeuvred into opposite sides[1]. Here the difference between the determinist approach of the Philosopher—historian and the creative artists rendering of the historical process becomes evident. After a historical event takes place it becomes a thing of the past and future scholars might consider it inevitable, But for men and women who bring it about through their conscious or unconscious participation in the process of history, a number of possibilities and choices must exist. What is a living problem of crucial dimension to them might become an analysable past for the official historian, a set of effects having a set of causes. These choices and possibilities

1. David Brown, Scott and the Historical Imagination, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979, P-198.

are no concern of his. But for the Novelist these are all important R. G. Collingwood calls these choices and possibilities the 'inside' of an event as opposed to the 'outside' of it, The function of characters in the historical novel, therefore is to convey a sense of this human reality behind grand, historical conflicts, to illuminate the process of history through their own experience,

In Scott's Waverley series and in the novels of Fenimore Copper and Tolstoy the characters' relation to history has been dramatised in two forms : the function of the protagonist and the portrayal of popular life, In Lukacs' view historical novel in its classsical form resembles an epic in the sense that both seek to project a total picture of reality. While an epic portrays the birth and decline of a whole generation and order and conveys a certain sense of completeness, the historical novel delineates reality in motion at points of critical change. The totality of the life of a whole community figures in the epic as its real protagonist. The epic heroes are important, but in relation to the experience embodied in the epic their role is ultimately secondary. Similarly, in a properly successful historical novel, history itself emerges as the protagonist and the human protagonist is important to the extent that his experience conveys at the human level, a sense of the conflict between forces greater than the individual. Scott s Waverley and Cooper's Leathers-tocking are 'neutral'. rather mediocre, individuals who come into contact with the warring sections representing the clash between opposed forces of history : tribe and society, individualism and community bonds, money power and old values. They participate in the conflict and allow the reader to get a fuller view of it but hardly ever become aware of the entire quality of the historical reality themselves. But they also communicate through their exprieences the sense of history as a tragic process,

Most of Scott's epic heroes, for instance, are always defeated; but, in the process, the problem of survival for a community or a nation is dramatized[1]. The major theme of Fenimore Cooper's Leatherstocking Saga is the disintegration of the, Red Indian communities with the coming of European frontiersmen. His protagonist, too, is a 'neutral' character who comes into contact with the warring opposities. He is simple, straight forward and is unconscious of his role as a pioneer of western civilisation in North America, however, he acquires a tragic dimension by being made a helpless witness to the incursion of machine and greed into the idyllic world of American wilderness.

It does not seem feasible to render a sense of the historical process at the level of the experience of the protagonist alone. Too much emphasis on the centrality of the protagoonist in a historical novel to the neglect of the experience of the anonymous masses who are the sub jects and objects of history would tend to reduce it into historical biography. The biogrphical form considers an individual to be crucial to his time. In the classical historical novels history is crucial to the individual and he derives his essential individuality from the point he happens to occupy in history. History in this context is made to mean the transformation of a whole community, a transformtion which provides the actions of the protagonist a special context. The private experiences of individuals, thus, cannot stand outside the special atmosphere of history,Shakespeare's 'Histories' illustrate the merger of the historical and the private by making history a part of the life of ordinary men and women. The street the mobst and the conversation among hangmen and assassions locate the basis of history in ordinary life. The classical historical novels written by Scott, Cooper and Tolstoy treat popular life as the basis of history,

1, D. D. Devlin, Op cit, P-46

A cursory look at the history of the English novel would show that few historical novels came to be written in English after Scott. Except for Manzoni in Italy and Tolstoy in Russia no one in the Continent during the whole of the 19th century wrote historical novels in the tradition set by Scott, But it must be remembered that Scott, in his own life time had already become a shaping influence in the European literary world and made his presence felt among writers. as diverse as Balzac and Goethe, Interest in history continued to affect the writing of novels much as before but the manner of the portrayal of history as a process seems to have undergone a change in the novels. which sought to explore past reality. The Victorian novelists, conception of history has been aptly summed up by Andrew Sanders :

> Lukacs fails to appreciate that the very distinctiveness of English history and of the inherited tradition of fiction made for an equally distinctive and varied response to Scott, one which can necessarily be paralleled by developments in the continent. The prejudices moulded by the bourgeois democracy in a nation which has not experienced invasion since the 11th century and which had produced a typical compromise in its reaction to reformation, made in turn for provincial fictional treatment of the subjects derived from incidents int he French Revolution or the Norman conquest or in the religious conflicts of the 16th and 17th centuries. Victorian historical novelists chose individual solutions to problems they found suggested in the Waverley novels and they felt free either to take what they wanted from Scott's example or to adapt Scott's formula to their particular ends, [1]

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1. Andrecw Sanders, The Victorian Historcal Novel, Macmillan, 1978, P-10

It seems in the Victorian novels, dealing with the historical process the individuals role as the instrument of history, private destiny as the medium through which historical forces work themselves out, gradually receded into the background,

In Dickens' 'A Tale of Two Cities' this gulf between characters and their historical context becomes clearly manifest. History, here appears as an emotionally charged context and the attention of readers is transferred from the transformation of the life of an entire community to the personal tragedy overtaking a few individuals. Even the attitude towards the past has lost the clarity which is characteristic of classical historical novels and tends to become ambiguous. This Dickensian formula has been developed more intellectually in two other Victorian historical novels : Romola by George Eliot and Callista by J. H. Newman. Both the novels are shaped around the progress of the heroine. But these novels differ fundamentally from those of Scott or Cooper in so far as the yearnings of the individuals for a purpose is seen as a constant human aspiration rather than as a product of specific historical circumstances, W. M. Thackeray's Henry Estond indicates a point of departure from the tradition set by Scott's Waverley. It sees historical process in a different way and makes use of a different technique while rendering it through the novel-form. The narrator is moody, sensitive and involved, one who can only describe what has happened to him from the point of view of his 'uniscience'. History emerges in Thackeray's disconcerting scheme as a series of arbitrary acts, not as a determined progress. However, it becomes clear that the interest in the historical novel was ebbing away. "Perhaps the most significant reason for the lapse of interest in the historical romance was the ascendance of the realistic novel in the 1840s" [1]

1. James C. Simmons, The Novelist as Historian, Mouton, 1973. P-59,

Growth of Historical Consciousness In Orissa

It has been customary to emphasise that Indian society has generally lacked a sense of history. This has been sought to be explained in terms of its notion of time as cyclical and its treatment of temporal change as illusory. But this is a very large question and requires a much broader explanatory framework. For purposes of the present discussion the growth of historical consciousness in Oriya society and its relation to the rise of the Oriya historical novel in the 19th century form our major points of enquiry. Leaving aside those philosophical or theoretical views of human history it is necessary here to confine the discussion to the gradual dawning of a historical consciousness in Orissa in the 19th century with the new urgency of discovering a national identity. Traditional metaphysical notions would naturally condition this emergence of a sense of history, but the process unfolds itself directly under the secular pressures of nationalism and modernism,

Traditional Oriya culture which had attained a great excellence in the sixteenth century managed to retain its essential character in spite of the periodical invasions and domination by Muslims and Marhattas in the following centuries. The social system remained largely unaffected and culture, as a whole, did not get cut off from its essential, traditional moorings. Literature then thrived under aristocratic patronage and was dominated by the lyrical impulse. Much of this courtly literature was composed in an ornate and florid style. Until the middle of the nineteenth century, traditional "ornamental" poety, written under the influence of ancient Sanskrit poetry: constituted the central literary

mode in Orissa. The themes treated by the poets could be divided into two broad categories : religious and secular. The secular themes were woven around romantic. erotic love of royal personages and led the poets to concentrate on idealised images of physical beauty, and stylized emotion: The religious poems expressed the yearnings of the soul to achieve union with the divine and the cosmic. The greatest of Oriya 'riti' poetry written under the inspiration of the Bhakti cult which swept Orissa after the advent of Chaitanya marked a rich creative fusion of the devotional and the secular. Spiritual longings would be presented in terms of the yearnings of a lovelorn Radha for Lord Krishna. Sometimes, the language achieved a certain measure of simplicity under the impact of a deep lyrical impulse, but florid poeticality remained the norm. Literature was concerned with 'rasa' its medium was alankara and its support were conventional romantic protagonists. Reality-both historical and contemporary-remained beyond its ken.

The popular culture of Orissa before 19th century comprised a rich tradition of puranas, legands, myths and folklore. In spite of the devastations wrought by Muslims and Marathas, the Orissan village, by and large, continued to be a harmonious, self-contained cultural unit. The even rhythm of its unified culture had not been disturbed by the disharmony between country and city which came to be a characteristic of 19th Century Oriya society. These traditional art-forms adequately expressed the beliefs and aspiration of the people whose world-view remained largely unchanged through centuries. This world view was shaped by a number of influence : Buddhism, Hinduism Jagannath cult with its distinct roots in tribal rituals and superstitions which form such a significant component of early, unselfconscious culture. While puranas and legends reflect the spiritual and religious dimension of

this world view, fhe folk-lores embodies their intimate experiences of everyday reality.

The coming of the British brought about far reaching structural changes in this more or less static hierarchical order. The process of transformation was painful since it was not impelled by forces from within the Oriya society but was imposed from above by colonial rule. The most immediate consequence of British rule in Orissa was the decay of the village. It lost its salf-sufficiency and its people were reduced to abject poverty through the British revenue experiments which led to large-scale indebtedness among the poor peasants, New legal institutions which were imcompatible with traditional local culture were imposed on the Oriya society, one of whose consequences was to be seen in large-scale transfer of land from the peasants to the money-lenders. The towns which became centres of commerce and administration destroyed the harmonious rhythm of life which was based upon a self-sufficient village economy. People in search of employment migrated to the towns, near and distant. The awareness of decaying countryside along with the emergence of flourishing towns imparted to much of 19th century literature a certain bite and poignancy.

The compulsions of colonial administration brought into being a new educated class for whom proficiency in the English language meant a secure livelihood and heightend social status. The creation of this new sophisticated class was also accompanied by the decline of the traditional elite and the culture that had been so assiduously preserved by it. The aristocracy either had to adapt itself to the unfamilar conditions created by British rule or had to suffer decay and displacement. The rise of a new class of moneylenders and Bengali bureoucrats who could out manoeuvre the old aristocracies and instal themselves in positions of power-landed,

administrative and commercial-marks an epochal change in the Oriya society. Adaptation here implied an acceptance of Western education and the liberal values associated with it. This led to a cultural crisis which did not, of course, always manifest itself as a conflict. During the Renaissance in Europe, we remember, the new reading public, composed of members of the mercantile middle class, had rejected the norms and values central to the aristocratic culture, and had slowly evolved their own values and built a new civilization, In the Indian situation on the other hand, a traditional, hierarchical society painfully transformed itself under an alien rule for its survival and it did so without always the conviction of acceding to a civilizing influence. It sought to accept the liberal values of Western culture as its own but at the same time failed to cut itself free of its moorings in the past. Its life tended to develop what can be called a divided consciousness[1] a deep-seated conflict between the past and the present, tradition and modernity, the country and the city. A knowledge of this peculiar cultural situation is crucial to one's understanding of the growth of historical consciousness in Oriya society at the turn of the 19th century; it is easy to have this knowledge because this division came to be reflected in all aspects of its culture.

The 19th century was a period of crisis for Orissa It has to be noted that before 1936 Orissa as a political entity was more a promise than a reality. Parts of what was in the past a sprawling empire were attached to different provinces for the sake of administrative convenience of the British. However, inspite of this lack

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1, Radhakant Barik, 'Gopabandhu and the National Movement in Orissa, 'Social Scientist, Vol—6 No. 10, p—41, 42

of political integration, a cultural unity sustained by a common language, a shared tradition held the people of Orissa together. This incipient sense of unity whfch existed at the level of culture later manifested itself as a demand for the unification of Orissa. It is important to recognise that this was more than a political aspiration. For the elite it was a compelling necessity, a way out of the sense of insecurity which grew into overpowering proportions during the 19th century. A series of famines had shattered an already weak economy of its people. The administration of the state lay largely in the hands of people from neighbouring states, particularly from Bengal. who were far from sympathetlc towards the people of Orissa and their culture and who, therefore, came to be viewed as exploiters and oppressors, Moreover through the influence of the liberal western education ideas of progress and nationlism began to take shape in the minds of the educated Oriyas towards the end of the 19th century, Because of the peculiar historical conditions which shaped it, Oriya nationalism was different in its content from Hindu nationalism which was the dominant strain in the 19th century Indian political thought. The Oriya elite were driven by the necessity of carrving out a separate identity of their own. Later, in the third decade of the twentieth century Oriya nationalism which expressed itself in a demand for a separate state became a part of the mainstream of Indian Nationalism.

Thus, the closing decades of the 19th century in Orissa constitute a phase of intense national self-consciousness. To be conscious of their identity in terms of a distinct tradition and culture of their own, involved. for the elite, a re-examination of their place in history, The need to assert themselves forced them to look afresh into the past since the present offered very little scope for sustaining the national pride. The image of the past, therefore. became crucial in their search for a distinct

identity within the British political system. This search for identity leads to the rise of a sense of history in Orissa. in an attempt to connect the past with the present. The new literary Renaissance which came into being in the process furnishes abundant illustrations of this compelling urge for rewriting history. Rama Shankar, for instance, based his plays on episodes from a particularly glorious period in Orissa history-the years before 1568—and sought to create the image of a golden age, This romanticised image of Orissa's past continued—and continues to be—a source of interest for the creative artists in Oriya literature. But, at the same time, others like Bhikari Charan Pattnaik did not look back at the past with such deep nostalgia. They presented the British conquest of Orissa as an auspicious event in the history ot the state since it held out the promise of progress and a better future for its people. [1]

In Europe. the Renaissance in national pasts was accompanied by a concern for fact as distinguished from pure myth or legend, True, their creative artists made abundant use of legendary material in their bid to portray a glorious past, but it always sought to create an impression of factuality, In contrast. history as it come to be understood in Orissa in the 19th century did not imply any alertness or obligation on the part of writers to distinguish it from myths and legends. Interest in the past grew as a consequence of political and cultural necessity without being accompanied by a scientific and critical outlook which characterised the Renaissance approach to reality in Europe. The sense of history in the Orissan context consisted largely of a traditional society's excited search for its roots in a hazy past.

1. Niladri Bhusan Harichandan,
Odia Aitahasika Nataka : Eka Singhabalokana,
The Jhankar, August, 1978, p—392

Since its break with the past was neither complete nor conscious, it lacked objectivity and often resulted in uncontrolled, sentimental attitudes towards the past. The writing of the history of the state by Oriya historians in the 19th century, and sometime after, clearly reveals such a temper of mind. Pyari Mohan Acharya wrote his History of Orissa in the 19th century proposed to look at the facts of the past from a more scientific and critical perspective but this concern for the reconstruction of the past through carefully sifted facts gave way to very soon to an emotional and uncritical ardour towards the past in the works of historians like Jagabandhu Singh and Krupasindhu Mishra. These historians write in the early decades of the 20th century when Oriya nationalism has already measured into an organised movement led by such highly articulate leaders as Madhusudan and Gopabandhu. The kind of history they were engaged in writing contributed to the Oriya nationalist movement by evoking the memory of a heroic past. The importance of their works lay in emphasising the cultural dimension of the past, too. From the prefaces of different histories of Orissa which came to be written before and since Independence and from comments of noted historians on the issues: it would appear that historical consciousness in Orissa is still not fully developed and continues to be at times involved in a process of uncritical self-glorification. [1]

History, then, in the context of 19th century Oriya culture became important only as a source in inspiration for the Oriya nationlist movement. Since growth of historical consciousness history was not accompanied by the emergence of a scientific temper and national out-look to a great extent. History came to comprise a body of legends surrounding dubious facts. This indicates that

1. Dr K. C. Panigrahi Mo Samayara Odisa, Kitab Mahal Cuttack 1978, p-138

19th century in Orissa was not marked by a radical break with the past. Tension between the traditional society and the demands of an alien but ascendant culture and not a conflict, characterises the cultural situation in Orissa during the 19th century. The image of the past continued to remain rather hazy and its relation to the present was projected mostly on emotional grounds. The concept of reality itself as a process did not strike any deep roots in the consciousness of the people. In other words, Orissa—and this may be true of the Indian situation as a whole at the time—failed in evolving a distinct perspective on history, on change as it affects human beings in the context of empirical reality.

Rise of the Historical Novel In Orissa

A study of Oriya prose fiction which came into being in the later half of the 19th century and its relation to history reveals an interesting pattern. The fact that the first Oriya novels were all written in the tradition of historical romances deserves to be carefully studied. The beginning of prose fiction in other Indian languages in the 19th century is also marked by the growth of historical romance and a tendency to revive the past. It should be noted, however, that in the European context novel as an art-form grew out of a pre-occupation with empirical and social reality. Historical romance emerged later, only to be absorbed again into the larger realist tradition in the 19th century. In case of the Indian languages on the other hand prose fiction appears first in the form of historical romance and acquires a realistic bias only later. This difference brings into sharp focus the dissimilar ways in which identical art forms matured in two different literary traditions. But the essential connection between the two is significant : modern Indian literature, particularly prose fiction in the early twentieth century grew under direct tulelage of western literature and represents an exciting and richly productive phase of East-West encounter.

The various aspects of this cultural interaction therefore, occupy a central place in the history of all modern Indian literatures. Its implications for the society as a whole have been stated earlier. In respect of the literary sense the most significant consequence of this encounter may be seen in the evolution of modern Indian prose, Before the spread of English education,

literature and verse were almost synomymous terms in the Indian tradition. No doubt there was a rich body of prose literature as also mixed forms of verse and prose such as the "Champu", But even there, prose sought to acquire the virtues of ornate, courtly poetry. Thus, Kadambari is more a prose poem than a straight-forward prose narrative, But in the altered context, it became necessary to forge a sufficiently vital and flexible prose style. Two of the major factors may be mentioned : the impact of the missionaries on the native culture and compulsion both of the new administration and the new knowledge on educatad minds. The missonaries sought to directly communicate with men and women engaged in the business of everyday life and found the ornate and sanskritized language of the time unsuitable for their purposes. They popularised the idiom of the common man and tried to disseminate their message through the printing press. Moreover, for administrative convenience, British officials had to learn and master the language of the natives. Naturally, they brought in the need for evolving a prose which could be used for purposes of communication in everyday life. Similarly, the native culture too, was now obliged to develop an adequate prose to state its values and aspirations—both cultural and creative-in modern terms. In the administrative sphere, again, the educated Indian found the the inspiration and need for patterning his style in line with standard English prose, This was bound to have an impact on his cther communicative contexts.

The emergence of modern prose style was both the effect and cause of far-reaching socio-cultural changes, T. W. Clark's observation in this context is apt,

> ...... "the adoption of prose as a literary vehicle was for all our languages a 19th century innovation. The forms used for narrative fiction, the novel, the novelette, the short story were new

also. New subjects, too, were sought out by the majority of authors. In spite of the persistence for a while in some languages of traditional themes, the prince, princess. romance and semi-magical hero of super human strength and mobility, the innovating writers tended to find their topic in situations drawn from contemporary life. The development in Bengal illustrates the process which, in one way or another was paralleled in most of the other languages, too. Contact with Western culture and literature had made the literate population more aware of the present and its problems and less interested in the past. The age-old monoploy of verse was broken ······ ·· Further more. the coming of the printing press had changed the method of transmission of literary creations.[1]

The above observation serves to underline the major implications of western influence on Oriya life and culture : the shift from romance to realistic prose narrative. and the choice of situations derived from the experience of contemporary life.

This partial indentity of the European tradition and the modern Indian one should not be emphasized over much, The difference between the two are of a fundamental nature, One of the important points of departure among romances. allegory and the novel form in Europe is that of structure. Critics of the novel form have variously outlined the nature of this basic structural difference. Lukacs considers the novel to be the art-form of disllusionment. In his view, the protagonist of the great realist novel progresses from illusions to disillusionment. Ian Watt. in a similar view,

1. T. W. Clark (ed), The Novel in India, George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1970, p.15

stresses the growing division between the individual and his society as crucial to the rise of this new form. In his scheme, individualism operates as the basic structural principle of the novel. In both the cases, structure of the novel does not allow itself to be based on idealised schemes, Romance, on the other hand, connot, properly accommodate disillusionment. for its structure is prepared on a pattern of wish fulfilment, The characters in a romance, as in allegories, are not sharply defined individuals, possessed of distinct inditilies, they only embody different forms of human aspiration in their broad general configuration.

An examination of the history of modern Oriya novel would show that the nature of its growth cannot be accounted for merely by stressing its rejection of earlier conventions : fables, fairy tales, myths, romantic poetry and melodrama, In Europe, the growing awareness of the distinction between the ideal and the actual history and legend, fact and fiction led to the decay of these conventions. But the new Indian context was noted for its extra.ordinary inclusiveness and amorphousness, Because of historical reasons, which was been discussed earlier,the co-existence of a number of mutually antagonistic traditions was possible here. There was no radical break with the past even though the society had to accept a set of values which involved a profound reorganisation of earlier mores, A hierarchical society based on caste-distinctions adapted itself to compulsions of Western culture for the sake of its survival but in its enclosed world change was really too slow to bring about an uncompromising opposition between the new individual and his old society Individualism, therefore, does not become the structural besis of Oriya novels. In fact, Oriya novel has yet to distinguish itself by a distinct, original identity of its structural pattern. In its early days it was a hybrid of the traditional fable, romantic poetry and melodrama. There are characters, there are

social settings and commentray, and there are occasional realiitic touches but the story is always made too melo-dramatic, didactic and ornately descriptive to allow for the emergence of a realistic form. The early practitioners of the novel form in Oriya do not seem to have been aware of the difference between the telling of a tale and logical ordering of events which gives the novel its controlied structure, In their novels these two get strangely mixed up. It is obvious that concern with empirical reality and the notion of the individual have not struck deep roots in the society itself,

It would be relevant here to discuss the influences on modern Oriya novel in its formative years, These influences are also responsible for giving the early Oriya novelists their concept of the novel. Besides the pressure of the native tradition, two other important influences on Oriya novelists can be easily identified : English literary tradition and its modern Indian manifestation in Bengali literature. The earliest practitioners of the novel—form in Orissa come from Bengali families who had settled in Orissa. Fakirmohan Senapati the most important Oriya novelist of those days, had intimate contact with Bengali life and literature, During the 19th century Bengali novelists such as Bankim Chandra were deeply influenced by the novels of Sir Walter Scott, Lord Lytton and Wilkie Collins. Both Scott and Bakim Chandra tell a good story and both are fond of projecting similar themes such as heroism in men and self-sacrifice in beautiful women, It is largely through writers like Bankim Chandra that the influence of English novelists percolated into the tradition of Oriya fiction,

Bankim Chandra's concept of the hitorical novel throws into sharp relief the dilemma of the writer of historical novel in India. This will also help one to see the problems of early Oriya novelists trying to give their novels a historical theme or setting. He seems to

have failed to resolve the problem of reconcilling the imaginative. invented world of fiction with historical truth or fact. The imaginary. he feels, will always be at odds with the claims of truth.[1] It seems, to Bankim Chandra history means a set of established facts and not a process, the nature of which can be grasped only through the use of imagination. This leads to the problem of the dichotomy between fact and fiction, The classical historical novels in the European context resolved this problem by treating the events as aspects of a process. In case of Oriya historical novels such a resolution has been long in coming. The prefaces in the early Oriya novels indicate the presence of a similar self-consiousness : the authors repeatedly assert that they are objective truth-tellers, but at the same time they are always conscious of the need to entertaining the reader by introducing imaginary material into the narrative, This dilemma continues to exercise the minds of present-day Oriya novelists and critics, too. It might be taken as a clear indication that in Orissa the concept of history has remained largely what it was during the 19th century, In the preface to his Nila Shaila written in 1966, Surendra Mohanty emphasises that novel is not history and goes on to restate the fact-fiction opposition in similar terms as authors in the 19th century did. The Oriya critics, too, reveal a similar attitude in their pronouncenents on the nature of the historical novel. For most of them the function of hisrorical novel is to make the dry facts of history appear palatable to the reader. Implicit in this is the assumption that the novel could be a good medium for teachfng history. This assumption seems to have motivated a number of attempts at romanticising history in Orissa and narrate different episodes as exciting

1. T. W. Clark, op cit,

tales. Ramachandra Acharya's famous Kamala Kumari may be referred to as an illustration of this process.

It may be argued that the failure to resolve the fact-fiction opposition did not affect the predilection for historical themes in Bengali and Oriya writers. But while in Bangal national self-consciousness manifested itself as Hindu revivalism in the novels of Bankim Chandra, in Orissa it expressed itself as Oriya nationalism. It is also possible that contemporary reality was not considered an interesting enough subject, and the novelists might have chosen historical themes to bring in a certain measure of respectability to these novels. An interesting parallel may be found in the early phase of the growth of the English novel. Of course, the problem which faces the early English novelists takes on a moral dimension.

Early novelists like Defoe were taken to task by the reading public for corrupting young minds by spinning out elaborate lies. Novelists like Richardson were extremely self-conscious and defensive and they sought to placate a puritan readership by makfng their fiction morally instructive. On the other hand, Oriya elite in the earliest days of the evolution of the novel-form seem to have been in possession of a real discriminating taste. The reviews on the books published in a journal towards the end of the 19th century reveal the strength of judgement which is rather remarkable to have in a reading public whose exposure to Western education was hardly more than three decades old. The fact that the prefaces of the novelists do not strike an apologetic tone and that a major novel like 'Chhamana Athaguntha' could be written so soon after the inception of this new form. persuasively argues the existence of a quite mature and discriminating reading public in Orissa in the latter half of the 19th century.

Evolution of the Historical Novel in Oriya Literature : Padmamali

In his prefaces to different editions of Padmamali,[1] the first Oriya novel, Umesh Chandra Sarkar expresses his sense of being a pioneer, He refers to the absence of proper prose fiction in Oriya literature and describes his own attempt to write one as an adventure. In his preface to the first edition of Padmamali, he speaks of the history of Orissa as one containing a rich quarry for imaginative prose fiction. In his preface to the second edition of the book he develops his idea of the relationship between history and fiction in the context of historicsl romance. History, as he sees it, is confined to a series of events of which he is quite emphatic, the historical novelist must preserve an accuracy of delineation, The duty of such a novelist, he declares, is to delight the reader without falsifying history or reducing the plenitude of historical accuracy of events. This insistence on factuality is meant among other things to establish his novel as the only historical romance in Oriya literature.

These prefaces reveal two important aspects of Sarkar's attitude to-wards the novel as an art-form and on the function of the Oriya novelist: he shares an aspiration to enrich Oriya language which was beginning to be a dominant concern of the writers of the time and he takes the historical novel to be a compound of historically accurate facts and imaginatively constructed fables or incidents, His interest in the history of Orissa:

1. Umesh Chandra Sarkar, Padmamali, Cuttack, 4th Edn, 1962.

as it is reflected in Padmamali needs a little more elaboration. This interest may be broadly patriotic, and in keeping with the spirit of the time. But from his statement in the preface it is clear that Sarakar tries to see history more specially as a storehouse of literary possibilities. The incidents he has chosen for his novel indicate his conception of history as drama: conflict between two kingdoms, conspiracy and so on. With all this creative interest in history, however, the synthesis of history and fiction has not been possible in his novel.

The author describes Padmamali as a 'Historical Romance of the Tributary mahals' On closer reading the novel would rather seem to be an attempt at complicating a simple romantic tale of separation and reunion of two pairs of young lovers by throwing in a bit of social criticism and introducing some historical incidents into its essentially simple, linear structure. This is possibly why historical incidents in the novel have not been properly assimilated into the theme and remain almost peripheral to the movement of the plot. It must, however: be noted that the importance of Padmamali as the first Oriya novel lies in its conscious attempt to make a sequence of rather incredible events appear realistic and convincing. It is obvious that Sarakar is rasponding to two compulsions while writing his novel the pressure of the native tradition of romance and didactic fable, and that of the growing modern need to reflect everyday reality in literature and appear objective and truthful. The emphatic assertion of Sarkar in his preface to the second edition of the novel that he has nowhere falsified history underscores his view of the novelist as an objective truthteller. But his concern to delight the reader obviously refers to the writers need to invent imaginative, entertaining narrative structures which are not faithful to history. It is true that the conflicting claims of both these components of his noelv

have not been reconciled satisfactorily. They have been allowed to coexist without being converted into an undifferentiable unified pattern. But this kind of a juxtaposition of the romance structure with a realistic mode is not peculiar to Sarakar alone. Some major Oriya novels which came to be written after Sarakar seen to continue the trend and operate as variations on the same strain.

The structutre of Padmamali is prepared, in the main, on the basis of two conflicts: one political and the other, romantic. The political conflict in the novel relates to a feud between two small Kingdoms in Orissa during the early decades of the 19th century. Into this has been woven the subject of the struggle for the throne of Nilgiri between the widowed Queen mother of Nilgiri and the younger brother of the deceased king who leads an uprising against her. But this political conflict is of peripheral interest in the novel. The love between the daughter of an official of the kingdom of Nilgiri and the king of Kaptipada furnishes for the novel its central conflict. The political conflict merges into the romantic one when the latter reaches a point of crisis towards the end of the novel : the heroine is abducted and hidden away in a garden by a lewd and coxrupt relation of the Queen mother and to rescue her the king of Kaptipada attacks Nilagiri supported by Harihar Bhramarbara Dev, who is an aspirant to the throne of Nilagiri. This conflict is resolved through the intervention of the British political Agent. Some of the rebels and the villain are punished, and the novel ends with the happy union and marriage of the hero and the heroine.

Though the structure of the novel finally boils down to a simple romance scheme of love separation union such an account does not do justice to the author's attempts at giving his novel a certain complexity and diversified structure. The action of the novel does not

develop in such a plain, linear fashion and the novelist makes use of a number of devices—commentary of a narrative voice, situations from ordinary life, antecedents of characters, evocation of atmosphere and the like, to distinguish it from a simple romance. A brief plot-summary would serve to show that the novelist is not merely narrating a tale: he is structuring a number of incidents and attempting to provide them a logically satisfying resolution. It is needless to say that the organisation of the novel lacks the sophistication one would find in a later novelist like Fakirmohan, but, at the same time it should not be forgotten that this attempt is of great historical importance for the tradition of Oriya readers,

The novel opens with a relaxed description of a community festival. The novelist brings to the reader a sense of the time and the locale against the background of which the events would take place. He deftly introduces some of the main participants in the action while concentrating on the festival scene, the hectic activity of the devotees and the priests, and moralises on human action. Then suddenly, the description plunges into a sensational episode. Padmamali, the heroine of the novel, who had come with her parents to the festival, is abducted by Duryodhan Das, a despotic and profligate official of Nilagiri and a distant relation of the Queen mother. The chapters which follow deal with the rescue of Padmamali by Parikshit Singh, the King of Kaptipada and their love. The seed of hostility between Duryodhan Das and Banchhanidhi, his accomplice, is planted right at the beginning; this will be of use to the author in resolving the conflict at the end of the novel. The easy natural manner in which the episode of Banchhanidhi's humiliation at the hands of Duryodhan Das and the former's vow of revenge are organised in the early stage of the novel testifies the author's conscious, careful handling of the plot-material.

After being rescued by Parikshit Singh, Padmamali is given shelter in a monastery. Now the focus of the novel rests on the subject of love between the king of Kaptipada and Padmamali. At this point another strand in the plot becomes discernible : this involves Jayanti, the daughter of the rebel chief who is loyal to Harihar Bhramar Dev and her love for Banchhanidhi. Now that the conditions for a sharper conflict at a later stage in the novel are already introduced, the novelist pauses to give a synoptic view of the history of Nilagiri. This hardly amounts to more than a bare detailing of facts. Incorporation of historical material in such an unimaginative fashion is bound to create a sense of artistic inadequacy because of this a meaningful link between the facts which are furnished and their importance for the protagonist would be difficult to establish. This brief account of the history of Nilagiri therefore, remains artistically unassimilated in the novel, But the point at which the historical matter is brought in and its brevity and artistic reveal a fine sense of structural organisation and artistic control should be noted that reference to history is made only after the main characters are intimately introduced to the reader. It seems that the novelist is not primarily interested in exploiting the sensational aspects of the history of Nilagiri rather he seems to be engaged in contriving a certain historical context for his melodramatic story. In other words he tries to give credibility and an appearance of reality to an essentially romantic tale by linking it to certain facts of history.

The chapters dealing with the history of Nilagiri are followed by a description of the way the news of Duryodhan's humilation at the hands of Parikshit Singh spreads. The rumours that now snowball through the kingdom render Duryodhan furious and he gets busy working out further strategies to capture Padmamali. He sends a messenger with a proposal for her hand in

marriage. The scene then shifts and the next three chapters deal with Padmamali's mysterious illness which is nothing more serious than the standard love-sickness of traditional literature. She is taken to the temple and a minor conflict is introduced. The King is shown to be torn between family honour and love, but this conflict is quickly dissolved through the mediation of the old priest. A secret betrothal of the young pair takes place there in the temple. At this point the machinations of Duryodhan fast precipitate the reversal of action. He imprisons Padmamali's father on trumped-up charges and abducts Padmamali for the second time. This time he abducts Jayanti, too, and takes her father a prisoner for having been on the rebels' side. Padamamali and Jayanti are hidden away in a garden and are kept under the surveillance of an old prostitute. This crisis brings Parikthit Singh and Harihar Bhramar Dev together. Earlier in the novel Parikshit Singh's unwillingness to help Bhramar Dev to regain the throne of Nilagiri has been underlined : now they join hands to attack Nilagiri. Banchhanidhi meets Jayanti and Padmamali in secret and carries a message to Parikshit Singh who rescues them. He reaches just in time to prevent Duryodhan from molesting Padmamali. The last chapter gives a brief acconnt of the intervention of the British Political Agent the trial and the punishment of the rebels, and the reunion of the lovers.

From this plot-summary, it should be obvious that Sarakar seeks to assimilate into his novel a number of elements and does not organise the various episodes in it along a plain, linear course, While the world of romance is self-justifying, the structure of a novel relies on the casual relations among episodes. Though Sarakar makes use of the obvious trappings of traditional courtly romance love at first sight. valour of the hero, the presence of lustful villain abduction of the heroine, a malignant old woman, union of lovers-his emphasis on credibi-

lity of and the causal connection among various events in the novel cannot be missed. Credibility of the episodes and causal relations among them together are essential to the structure of retlistic novels. Realism in Padamamali may be seen here in two things. The novelist's attempt to unfold the romantic tale against a concrete background of social and historical reality and his care in presenting the events as consequences of earlier actions or motives. The significance of the former attempt will be discuseed a little later. The second attempt serves to complicate the simple formula of a romance. For instance, Banchhanidhi's role as a saviour at the end of the novel is linked with his humiliation at the hands of Duryodhan Das in the beginning. Similarly Duryodhana Das's intrigue to marry Padmamali is shown to be in part a consequence of his wrathful reaction because of the rumours about his humiliation. But in fact, realism exists in the novel only as occasional touches, fhe central concern of the novelist being the unfoldment of a romantic tale. This concern becomes apparent from the way the novelist resolves two conflicts in the plot. Even after an open confession of his love before Padamamali, Parikshit Sing made to swing between compulsions of family honour and passlon. Padmamali, too, is shown experiencing terrible uncertainty about her future The other conflict grows out of Jayanti's inability to marry Banchhanidhi whom she loves, since she is betrothed to another. The first conflict is resolved by the priest who convincces the king that there is nothing wrong in marryying Padmamali because such a marriage would be in line with the accepted practice among Gurjat Kings. The operation of chance resolves the other conflict. Gobind Sardar, who is betrothed to Jeyanti is killed by a stray bullet in the encounter with British soldiers, The manner in which these conflicts have been resolved is typical of a romance.

Sarkar's attempt to reconcile ramance with the demands of realism is also reflected in his characterisa-

tion. Some of his characters clearly belong to the world of romance while others are chosen from the ordinary, everyday life. Sarakar's characterisation shows his constant endeavour to make these romance figures appear real and life like. He makes ure of two important techniques to render his romance figures credible enough human beings who are acceptable to the more sceptical reading public of the modern times. In the first place, he places his romance figures in an actual historical context. The antecedents and beckgrounds of different characters have been elabotately presented so that they could seem to be rooted in historical reality. Some of the characters are actual historical figuress, too though, of course, even they are made to contribute to the resolution of the romantic tale. But their presence naturally lends to the story a certain measure of authenticity and historical authoriry. The other technique relates to making the romance characters experience certain deep psychological conflicts which are designed to give them some human depth and complexity, But with all this effort at realistic presentation, it will be seen that the main preoccupation of the author is with the romantic tale, a preoccupation. which leads him to idealise his characters and make them appear more than ordinary. This results in a peculiar amalgam of experience for the reader—while the sense of reality is not altogether cancelled out, the pervasive touch of romance is never made absolute.

In the first chapter the author gives an elaborate description of the beauty of Padmamali. A whole para graph is devoted to establish the perfection of har youthful form. The narrator wakes lyrical and uses images and metaphors in the manner of courtly Riti poetry in which it was customary to present an idealised image of the heroine in heightened and embellished language. Similarly in the fifth chapter Parikshit Singh is deserlbed in exalted terms and his great physica l

beauty and grace, heroism and personal courage are expressed in the ornate language characteristic of traditional romances or courtly poetry. Other characters like Duryodhan Das and Ramiya's mother are also typical romance figures who represent evil in the abstract. In Parikshit Singh and Padmamali are symbols of perfection, these two characters are embodiments of pure evil. Duryodhan Das represents the romance figure of the lustful villain. Ramiya's mother reminds one of the 'mohini' figures in Oriya folk tales who charm innocent virgins and throw them into adulterous arms. Such a melodramatic, black and white patterning, one might note, is peculiar to the romance tradition, and alien to the tradition of realistic fiction.

However, the self-consciousness of the author becomes clearly manifest, This may be seen in the passages which contain ironical references to contemporary life and also in the author's attempt at providing justification for different acts and behaviour of his characters, A multitude of references to contemporary reality at different places in the novel serve to persuade the reader that since the characters belonged to a different context—here the context of history—they should not be judged by the standards of contemporary social life. It would not, of course, be true to say that the ironical references to oontemporary reality in the novel involve at all places such a conscious design on the part of the author, At times, they are irrelevant and digressive, But, interestingly enough, the tendency to justify the action and behaviour of certain characters is explicit at those very points where they seen to be at the greatast remove from reality, For instance : one may look at Sarkar's dramatisation of the confrontation between Padmamali and Duryodhan in second chapter, The dialogues there make Padmamali appear to be a mature woman, far advanced in age and familiar with the ways of the warld, Though a very young girl still

in her adolescence, she talks with the confidence and clarity of a woman of great worldly wisdom arguing out a point in the security of her parlour.[1] Her words and voice in the context are totally unconvincing and the author seems to have forgotten for a moment that for her it was a moment of terrible crisis, Interestingly enough the author seem to be himself quite aware of this unrealistic quality in the portrayal of Padmamali. In the very next chapter; for instance, he strains to convince the reader that the porsonality of Padmamali as delinented by him is quite in keeping with reality. She is deseribed as an extra-ordinarily intelligent girl who was already familiar with all the different literary and religious texts at a very early age, and therefore, the readar is invited to accept her extra-ordinary composure and maturity of tone as quite natural[2]

The author also makes an attempt to justify the responses of different characters to various situations in the novel. These responses are obviously some of the fixed and unchanging traits associated with romance figures. Parikshit Singh is shown to be always full of valour; Duryodhan Das is always spiteful and vindictive Padmamali is all sweetness, grace and beauty. Jayanti's father is courageous and does not have the slightest fear of death; Ramiya's mother is wicked to the core. These dominant traits in their character are emphasised throughout the novel whenever they interact with other character or situations. They donot change nor do they develop, But, in some cases, the author tries to endow certain characters with a measure of individuality by treating their nature as the product of their own unique situation, their upbringing, their past experience and so

1. Umesh Chandar Sarkar, op cit, p-11 and 12

2. Umesh Chandra Saraka, op cit, P-19

on. He seeks to explain Duryodhan's wickedness by referring to the psychological perversion natural to a bastard. Similarly, in chapter.20, the author narrates at some length the conditions which forced Ramiya's mother to become a prostitute and in her old age, to work as an instrument of evil. Only the character of Banchhanidhi in the novel is permitted to undergo some change. From a henchman of Duryodhan in the beginning of the novel he is transformed into the saviour of Padmamali and Jayanti. And it cannot be said to be an unnatural matamorphosis. Suffering bitterly at the hands of Duryodhan he decides to take revenge upon his master and the author intelligently uses this to resolve the plot.

Aside from these romance figures who are placed against a historical background, one meets a number of subsidiary characters who are chosen from ordinary lite, The realism in the portrayal of these characters is of a remarkable order. They are shown to be engaged in the normal business of everyday living and their life is not described in terms of lofty metaphors of inornate language. Of course, this aspect of the novel is not adequately developed by the novelist since his main interest lies in developing the romantic plot. However, images of ordinary life surface at certain points of the novel with a rare vividness. In chapter-10, the author presents an engaging account of the talk between an ordinary couple about the abduction of Padmamali. The relaxed language, and the realities of everyday life as they are depicted here by the author render these characters convincingly alive. But such moments are rare in the novel. The oppression of the common people which is often hinted at by different characters in the novel has not been sought to be directly dramatised anywhere, An inspired tirade by Jayanti's father in the 27th chapter gives a thetorical account of the miseries

of the common people. but this cannot have the power of a living delineation of the subject,

The narrative voice in the novel makes use of two contrasted tones· a stylized, high-serious, rhetorical, solemn and sentimental tone and ·a light-hearted, airy, humorous, earthly tone. The tone of intimacy that is necessary for a realistic novel and the tone of distancing necessary for romance, though not synthesised have at least a copresence here. The rhetorical stylixed tone is used in the novel either when the novelist wishes to describe a romantic situation or idealised character, or when he makes didactic comments on human life. The author's uneasiness while dealing with the restricting material of history and reconciling the claims of realism with those of romance becomes obvious from a number of explanatory statements he incorporates into the novel. He is at pains to convince the reader that what he is narrating is not fictitious but true. In fact, in chapter 23 the narrator takes the reader into his confidence and discusses his problem in tackling the divergence between history and poetic justice. He vaguely hints at the nature of history as a relentless process but fails to develop this because history, in this case, is nothing moro than a set of bare events, to be imposed on a romantic tale without affecting its wish-fulfilment quality. An ironical light-hearted tone is used by the author whenever he deals with realistic situations of ordinary life and contrasts the present with the past. Sarkar's social criticism. meant perhaps as ironic asides, often obtrude and distract attention from the centre of the narrative. For example, while talking about Mahant Ramanuj Das, he digresses and talks at considerable length about the evils associated with the new generation of English-speakar young men who sneer at their own heritage.[1] At other places, this tone is

1. Umesh Ch. Sarakar, op cit, P-43.

utilised to create humour, Sarkar offers a delightful account of the way rumour spreads. The debate among the courtphysicians in chapter-13 and 14 is also rendered very entertaining.

Thus, the world of Padmamali embraces two widely separated spheres : the sphere of history which involves oppression of ordinary people by corrupt feudal authorities, a battle, and the intervention of the British political Agent, the trial and punishment of evildoers and the sphere of romance which centres round the love between the king of Kaptipada and the daughter of an ordinary official. The author seems to be pre-occupied with the accurate presentation of historical facts. Twice in the novel, he asserts his commitment to the facts of history and claims that he has tried his best not to deviate from the facts, But as has been seen, history in this novel is confined to a few events, The main bulk of the novel comprises the story of romantic love revolving round a few characters. Only it so happens that some of these characters are historical. But obviously history does not shape these characters. It might appear from the author's statement at the beginning of chapter—23 that the novelist is aware of history as a shaping process, He talks there about the readers moral expectation and how it conflicts with the relentless facts of history which often Involve unmerited suffering. He seems to be using history to draw some kind of a broad moral out of it. But this dees not issue from a deeper understanding of the process of history itself, it is confined to the career of some individual characters. Thus the presence of history is hardly significant—it is merely a background and for the rest it is not delineated as anything special or different from the history of the characters which constitutes the story of the novel,

The sphere of romance, however, gives evidence of the increasing pressure of the writer s concern with

contemporary reality. It often keeps breaking through in the form of self-conscious justification of the action and behaviour of different characters and ironical references to contemporary social reality. The very attempt to give the romantic character substance and credibility by placing them in an identifiable past time is indicative of such a concern. This interpenetration of romance and realism in the first Oriya novel is certainly a notable feature. And it is remarkable that by the time Fakirmohan writes "Chhamana Athaguntha" Oriya novel has already evolved a mature realist perspective. In his historical romance, Lachhama, too, a realist's concern with the social reality of the past dominates the unfolding of the romance tale. But this is to anticipate. We have to take stock of the history-romance pattern in another major Oriya novel before coming to grips with the achievement of Lachhama.

Bibasini

Bibasini,[1] a historical romance by Rama Shankar Ray was serialised in Utkal Prava in 1891. Rama Shankar Ray was also a pioneer playwright of Orissa and his most successful play, Kanchi, Kaberi dramatised a glorious episode from the annals of Orissa, the slighting of the Gajapati King of Orissa by the King of Kanchi and the conquest of Kanchi by way of vindicating his honour. Into this historical conflict is woven the legend of Lord Jagannath's participation in the war as an ordinary soldier and that of the romantic story of the marriage between the King of Orissa and the princess of Kanchi, History and legend commingle and fuse into each other in this literary recreation of a golden but remote past.

In his novel, on the other hand, Rama Shankar Ray seeks to portray a decadent and recent past—the state of Oriya society under Marhatta rule, which was still part of public memory. Such a shift from a sentimental pre-occupation with the remote and hazy past to the bitter reality of the recent past may be taken to indicate the growing pressure of realism on the Oriya writer. As has been noted, this pressure of realism is already menifest in Sarakar's self-consciousness in Padmamali, where he seeks to furnish justifications for the ingredients of an essentially romantic tale. This is one of the reasons why he provides a historical context to his characters who distinctly belong to the tradition of romance. But in Rama Shankar's Bibasini one can easily discern a difference : his canvas is bigger and

1. Rama Shankar Ray, Bibasini, Rama Shankar Granthabali, Bani Bhandar, Cuttack, 1930

history in the novel serves a more significant function than making certain romance-figures appear credible. The structure of the novel, therefore, is much more complex here. An analysis of the structure is necessary for developing a proper perspective on this new attempt to blend history and fiction in Oriya literature.

Unlike Padmamali in which a simple romance plot operates through the conventional pattern of love-separation-union, Bibasini organises its elements at two distinct levels of a main plot and a sub-ordinate plot. The main plot is centred on love and adventure while the secondary plot works out the theme of social protest. It is true that the secondary plot has not been very carefully constructed and its resolution appears to be melodramatic and unconvincing. But, through this the author seeks to create a picture of social reality under the Marhatta rule--a tragic setting against which he unfolds the romantic tale dealing with love, adventrue and sacrifice. The novelist also seeks to make the tensions in the romantic tale grow out of the historical situation projected in the novel. There are a number of points in the novel at which the link between the main plot and the secondary plot is carefully established, It would be neccessary to discuss the plot in order to appreciate the manner in which romance and history interact in the novel.

It opens with the description of a moonlit landscape, and goes on to intensify an errie atmosphere in which, towards the later part of the chapter, it introduces two mysterious personalities talking about a raid they are planning to conduct that very night, The following chapters introduce them and their comrades more intimately, and describe their expedition. Halfway through this description, the novel suddenly changes course and presents two young girls, one a widow, and the other still unmarried, absorbed in an intimate con-

versation. For quite some time hereafter the narrative proceeds in two parallel planes simultaneously without allowing them to touch each other the dacoits proceed to plunder the houses of to despotic rich men named Radhagobind Chowdhury and Gobardhan Das, and at the same time the two girls who are related to those rich men, remain busy exchanging their deeply sentimental confidences completely unaware of the imminent danger. These two threads are brought together in the scene of dacoity at the end of which the dacoits leave not merely with a rich booty. but carry away the two girls as well.

Soon after, the action shifts to the Subedar's court at Cuttack, Now the author dramatises the encounter, between the Subedar and a person named Das Khadanga who has been casually introduced in one of the earlier chapters, A paragraph sums up the nature of the Subedar's misrule. While Radhagobinda Chowhury—who is in the employ of the Subedar—is shown trying to convince the subedar that people are living happily under his rule, Das Khadanga goes forward to present the Subedar a handful of withered saplings to reveal the true picture of things to him, At this point a messenger arrives bringing news of the robbery in Radhagobinda's house. Das Khadanga is immediately taken a prisoner, and Duman Sardar, an official of the Subedar, is sent to the village of Radhagobinda with a few sepoys to conduct the enquiry.

The scene now shifts to a hillock where the dacoits are enjoying a feast after paying their respects to two ascetics who live there. Then the reader is conveyed to the fort of the Sandh King of Paradwip. The only important event to occur here as far as the development of the plot is concerned is the meeting between the dacoits and the King. The reader is left guessing about the full implications of the relationship between the

king and the robbers, though some link was hinted at in the third chapter. Then the novelist again returns to the people engaged in feasting in the company of the ascetics, and presents the ascetics seriously discussing the imminent famine, Next we see the return of Radhagobinda to the village in the company of Duman Sardar and others. It is a tense scene dramatising the suffering of Radhagobinda and the total absence of sympathy for him in the vast mass of people who follow him. At the conclusion of the scene, Radhagobinda dies of shock when he sees that his wealth is gone. It is at this point that the identity of Duman Sardar is revealed. Though he is an official in the employ of the Subedar, he has joined the group of bandits organised by the Sandha King to plunder the rich and help the poor people oppressed under Marhatta misrule.

Now the novelist concentrates on the romantic theme. The romantic plot revolves mainly round the two woman who has been abducted by the dacoits, Raghunath Pattanaik, the leader of the dacoits, and Mayadhar, a dacoit and the uncle of the Sandha King. Raghunath develops a sudden infatuation for the widow, Kalabati. He brings her to his house and sends the other girl, Rasakala, to the King's palace. The queen grows very fond of Rasakala and the royal couple plan to give her in marriage to Raghunath. Mayadhar becomes jealous of Raghunath and wants to marry one of the abducted women, The King invites Raghunath to his palace to persuade him to marry Rasakala, But, at this point. there is again a change in the action. The reader is now conveyed to the Subedar's court where on receiving the news of Radhagobinda's death, the enraged Subedar orders Das Khadanga to be executed. Das Khadanga falls dead when he hears the order. To intensify the melodrama Ramashankar describes two other deaths—Das Khadanga's mother and wife sink to the ground and pass away immediately after him and leave behind a young

child who stands there uncomprehendingly among the dead bodies.

After the digression, the scene shifts to the palace where the Sandha King and his queen are persuading Raghunath to marry ·Rasakala. Strangely enough. avowedly because of his loyalty to the King Raghunath at once commits himself to marrying her in spite of his deep love for Kalabati. For her part, Kalabati is also shown experiencing a similar kind of conflict between the memory of her dead husband and her growing fascination for Raghunath. Raghunath. and Kalabati meet each other in a garden and Raghunath. for the first time in the novel, openly expresses his love for Kalabati, and asks her to marry him. But Kalabati succeeds in convincing him that such a marriage will violate the sacred laws and persuades him to marry Rasakala[1] In the same chapter she comes to know that Raghunath was the leader of the dacoits who had murdered Rasakala's father and her Foster-father. These discoveries do not lead to any serious psychological conflicts in the novel Kalabati accepts this information with a surprising composure. The quick adaptability of Raghunath through all this is equally bewildering and unconvincing.

The next few chapters deal with the coming of the famine which has loomed over the action of the novel right from the beginning. The famine in a way provides a point of fusion to the political theme of oppression and protest and the romantic theme of love and jealousy within the novel's structure. But it does not form a part of the main action of the novel. The account of the famine reads more or less like a newspaper report. Driven by jealousy Mayadhar decides to meet the Subedar and betray the Sandh King and Raghunath, By this time, the resentment of the oppressed masses comes

1. Ramashankar Ray op cit, P-421.

to a head and an angry mob sets fire to the Subedar's palace just as Mayadhar is reporting the treacherous activities of the Sandh king and Raghunath. The Subedar escapes by swimming across the river Kathjuri, but Mayadhar is drowned. And the novel ends with an image of harmony both at the level of social life and that of the individual characters operating in the romantic plot, The famine is over and the Subedar is removed by the Marhatta rulers for his inefficiency. The people celebrate the return of peace and harmony by holding a big community feast on the Nandikeswari patha. Raghunath and Rasakala get married at this feast in an atmosphere of collective jubilation, To leave no scope for further complications, Kalabati is shown committing suicide after her mission is over,

The structure of 'Bibasini' may be seen to have been built around two conflicts in the novel: the larger historical conflict which involves the despotic Subedar and the growth of popular protest, and the romantic conflict which involves Raghunath Pattnaik, Kalabati, Rasakala and Mayadhar. In fact, the manner in which the world of romance is rendered as a part of the larger historical conflict, constitutes one of the most significant features of this novel.

It begins with dacoits plundering the houses of people who have grown rich by exploiting the poor villagers, but at the same time. it introduces the romantic plot by bringing in the episode of abduction. These two strains are there-after developed simultaneously, imparting to the novel a structure that is far more complex than that of Padmamali. The reader's attention is constantly made to oscillate between the conflict in the minds of individual characters participating in the romantic action. and the vast panornoma of suffering at both the social and individual levels caused by Marhatta misrule. This community suffering is sharply individua-

lised the tragic fate of Das Khadanga who is a moving dramatisation of the plight of common man. It may also be seen that the conflict in the romantic plot is resolved through events flowing from the larger conflict.

It is thus obvious that the structure of Bibasini is different from, and far more complex than. that of Padmamali, In Padmamali, the author's main effort is to complicate the simple lincar structure of conventional romance by bringing in incidental references to contemporary reality and minor conflicts which are hastily resolved. The trappings of romance are also prominent in Bibasini : abduction, adventure, melodrama and love union, Though thete elements constitute an imnortant part of the novel, its structure is not kept simple or linear on the basis of this romantic plot, In other words. Ramashankar is trying to do more than merely propelling the story towards an exciting union of the lovers. He is secking to create a structural pattern which could also accommodate the experience of history as a crucial moment that is to say the experience of a whole community at a particular cross-road of history. He has not. of course succeded entirely in his attempt at evolving such a structure. But the fact that he views history as the social reality of the people in the past in itself marks an important advance over Sarakar, It is true Ramashankar is conscious of a tension between fidelity to reality and stylization necessary for art. But this is confined to the question of artistic treatment—we do not encounter the conciousness of a more fundamental nature involving the relationship between fact and fiction. For in a histrorical novel. it is not merely that fiction should have an unswerving orientation to fact, fact itself has to be conveyed in a fictional form. Even in its tentative form however. this new attitude towards history gives Ramshankar's novel three structural bases : history social picture and romance, History and social picture are not present in the novel as static backgrounds, They are

portrayed in a state of motion, affecting the destiny of indivldual characters, though in a limited way

A study of the element of characterization in Bibasini would show that Rama Shankar is not alive to this deeper strain in his novel. Its social picture merely indicates that the anthor is vaguely aware of history as a moment in the life of a community, a particular atmosphere which gives events and persons a certain individuality. His major concern is not to make the romance-figures appear absolutely real, he is primarlly engaged in pressnting a romantic story in an acceptable moral form, As in Padmamali. characters here fall broadly into two greups : those who belong to the sphere of hisioty and those who belong to the world of romance. In the novel both these worlds constantly interpenetrate. The Subedar, Das Khadanga, Sandha King and Duman Sardar belong to the sphere of history. But, unlike Sarkar, Rama Shankar does not strain to produce actual historical figures and facts. He seeks instead, to convey the sense of a sensational historical context of famine and Marahatta misrule hy contriving a few inadequately individualised characters. The Subedar is presented as an utterly despotic and evil creature, driven by impulses of greed and cruelity. Das Khadanga is a victimfigure in the novel. He is created by the author to symbolise the suffering of the common people, His character. too, is not sought to be any more particularly individualised. His pathetic end and the death of his wife and mother are unabashedly organised in a directly melodramatic style. The manner in which the palace of tne Sandha King is described brings to mind the picture of Kings in romance. Though he is initially portrayed as one who storve to fight the Subedar's misrule, his function in the novel is limited to the patronage he extends to the lovers,

Rama Shankar's moral concern becomes prominent in his treatment of characters who beloug to the

sphere of romance. These characters contrast sharply with their counterparts in Padmamali. In Padmamali Sarakar makes use of two devices to make his characters appear credible, and to endow them with individuality. He makes them experience psychological conflicts and seeks to logically design their behaviour and action. The conflicts which his characters face. however, are quickly resolved whenever they seem to obstruct the smooth development of the romantic plot. In Bibasini, the narrator occasionally allows the characters to express themselves through dramatic dialogues and acquire a kind of individuality. This indicates a more developed sense of fictional dialogue and a tendency to treat characters as individuals. But a prudish moral concern on the part of the novelist seems to dissipate the conflicts arising out of the interaction among individual characters and their interaction with external situation. This may be clearly illustrated from the conduct of the romantic trio. Raghunath abducts Kalabati and falls deeply in love with her. She. too, is shown developing a great attachment to him. But when the Sandha King persuades Raghunath to marry Rasakala, the author makes him commit himself to marrying her just because he is devoted to the King. The very next chapter deals with the conflict in Kalabati's mind between love and propriety. Strangely enough only now Raghunath express his love to her and although She leaves him in no doubt whatever about her love for him. she expresses her inability to violate the injunctions against second marriage. Raghunath readily reconciles himself to this, and his passion is quickly converted into brotherly love. The novelist tries to pass off such an otherwise unconvincing transformation as natural by referring to the hold of religion on their minds.[1] Earliar in the novel he has hinted at the impossibility of such a marriage by

1. Ramashankar Ray, op cit, P-421.

dwelling on Raghunath's devotion to his mother who would not allow her son to marry a winow. One finds that such developments are not prompted by any more weightly compulsions than a conventional moral interest of the author.

This moral concern is also responible for reducing most of the characters into two-dimensional figures. Their responses are mechanical and alway conditioned by the moral pre-occupation of the author. He introduces his characters first by delineating their external appearance and linking in a broad Dickensian Style, physical appearance with moral virtues. The good characters are handsome and graceful, while the evil characters look ugly and repulsive. Such a complete commitment to a black-and-white morality on the part of the author robs the characters of their complexity. For instance, the distinction between Ragunath and Mayadhar as developed in Chapter-3 clearly exhibits such a simplistic scheme. This also indicates the influence of traditional literature on his method of characterisation. The manner in which characters are made to respond to each other and to external reality shows Rama Shankar's utter disregard of realism and his uncritical commitment to the principle of poetic justice. In a brief comment in the fifth chapter, he describes the artist as one who is precariously wedged between the conflicting claims of truth and morality. But his characterisation does not reveal such a conflict. He is engaged in creating a world where evil is punished even if good may not always be rewarded.

This attitude towards characters is revealed through the narrative voice, too, In contrast, narrative voice in Padmamali is very much restrained and it never obtrudes, But the moral pre-occupation of Ramashankar leads him to create a garrulos narrator who intervenes frequently and regales the reader with moral reflection and philosophical truisms, Its most important function

in the novel is to evoke atmosphere, report the incidents and describe the mental states of different characters and pronounce moral judgements on them. It is ramarkably successful in creating atmosphere, as in the first chapter and later, when it describes the village scene in the middle of the night, But its undesirable intrusion at crucial dramatic moments, just as an interesting conflict is being shaped, is what robs the novel of much of its appeal. All through, the narrative voice goes on serving a standard concoction : a bit of landscape-description, description of the physical appearance of characters, ironical asides on the state of the contemporary society, moral reflections on the vanity of man, and so on. Most of these comments, however, are not relevant to the movement of the plot and are digressive in character. They tend to deflect attention from the action of the novel, and do not guide the reader's response to different characters and incidents in the novel in any meaningful way. It has one central quality—an intense moral pre-occupation, It reveals Ramashankar's eagerness to draw a moral out of every incident in the novel, to condemn what he considers evil and lavish praise on what he believes is good. This tendency may be observed in its most conspicuous form in chapter-26. At the beginning of this chapter the author spends a long time condemning, the vice of miserliness, and then he proceeds to portray Radhagobinda's suddenly death. The narrator descants upon people's contempt for Radhagobinda and upon his sudden demise with unconcealed moral glee. A similar tone in the narrative voice gains prominence when it describes the death of Mayadhar.[2] It is clear that the narrative voice is not distinguished by its objectivity, and is explicit in its eagerness to moralise, howsover it be at odds with the requirements of a realistic novel. Its solicitation of the reader's attention whom it

1 and 2, Ramashankar Ray, op cit, p-385, 433.

often addresses directly, degenerates into a more mannerism. The narrative voice which maintains a tone of easy intimacy, and which combines compassion with objectivity and attempts to impart to the reader, a knowledge of the significance of its structure, will take shape only later in Fakirmohan's novels.

The importance of Bibasini in the history of Oriya literature consists in its attempt to treat history as an active background, as one that influences the destinies of individual characters. Ramashankar does not succed in fully achieving this, because of his shallow moral concern and consequent failure at being objective, But a reading of Bibasini makes one aware of a larger epic struggle at the back of the incident involving some few individuals. Ramashankar is not merely incorporating a few details of the history of a small state as does Sarakar in his Padmamali. History is not confined here to a set of events. It is present in the novel as a broad background of famine and Marhatta misrule. History and romance are sought to be presented as two interpenetrating themes in the novel. The theme of protest and that of love and adventure are shown in their various interactions. But the links are rendered tenuous because of the author's obsession with a traditional simplistic moral scheme and because of his failure to properly assimilate the stark realities of life he is delineating,

Lachhama

Fakirmohan represents a major turninig point in the history of Oriya prose fiction. The writers who preceded him were primarily intersted in telling an exciting tale of ·love and adventure, though their novels betray a certain uneasiness while presenting a purely fictitious world which is at a remove from contemporary reality, they find it hard ·to contain their impulse to romance. The experience of contemporary reality keeps breaking through in their novels but the past is always presented ·in an ·obscure, romantic context. Such an image of the past dearly indicates the absence of a sense of history which views the past, present and future as aspects of a process. Considered from such a point of view the present ·appears to be the product of the past, and the seed-bed of the future. The novelists who wrote before Fakirmohan had·produced his '*Chhamana Athaguntha* failed to eproprly project the relation between the past and present, and this may be the reason why the novels of both Ramashankar and Sarakar stress the distance of the present from the past. While in *Padmamali* history is confined to a set of sensational episodes, in *Bibasini*, it is a broad, hazy, romantic background. But, of course, it has to be admitted that their attempts at synthesising history with fiction already contained possibilities which Fakirmohan realised with great success and certitude within the realist framework of his novel.

The novels of Fakirmohan are distinguished by their serious exploration of social reality. In three of his major novels, the trappings of romance are

conspicuously absent and in *Luchhama*,[1] which is designed as a historical romance, the compulsions of romance are overshadowed by Fakirmohan's realistic ardour in the portrayal of the past.

Critics of Oriya fiction have rightly stressed that., taken together, the four major novels of Fakirmohan constitute an epic delineation of the evolution of modern Oriya society. It is clear, that in all his novels Fakirmohan seeks to project the changing social situation in Orissa through credible characters and incidents chosen from real, everyday life. To be so consistently and seriously concerned with the evolution of a whole society in proof that Fakirmohan is possessed of a deep sense of history which is found only fitfully, as a vague awareness, in the works of his predecessors. His autobiography too, reveals a high degree of historical consciousness. As he narrates it, the story of his life becomes a medium for furnishing the history of Orissa during the last two hundred years: Marhatta rule, the coming of the British, the decay of traditional aristocracy collapse of the economy and the rise of a new elite.

More important for our purposes the fact is that in Fakirmohan this historical consciousness has been deeply embedded in the structure of his novels. Until Fakirmohan, the structure of Oriya novel implied nothing more than a loose assortment of romance elements, leavened by some social criticism and historical facts. As has been seen a logically satisfying resolution of tensions arising out of the interaction among characters chosen from real, everyday life and their encounter with external reality is not found in the novel of Ramashankar and Sarkar. Fakirmohan, on the other hand reveals a fine sense of structure. He succeeds in

1, Fakirmohan Senapati, Lachhama, Fakirmohan Granthabali, Cuttack Students' Store, Cuttack.

providing a human objectification to the changes and conflicts within the structure of the society through the lives and actions of credible and complex characters, For instance, in his *Chhamana Athhguntha* Fakirmohan is primarily interested in portraying the decay of the Oriya village in the nineteenth century under the impact of a new mercenary instinct in the society. But what he brings forth is not a set of mechanically contrived abstractions but an intensely moving human drama involving real living characters. Every element in the novel has its relevence within the structure which is designed to present not only the conflict between a cruel money-lender and a poor peasant but ultimetely conflict between two worlds: the age-old world of faith and the new one of craft. With the fall of the money-lender the action of the novel is shifted to the town—Fakirmohan now goes on to dramatise a confrontation between values of city and those of the country, a theme that is repeatedly expressed in his novels. Even the tone of the narrator undergoes distinct changes as the scene shifts to the town—he no longer creates the complex, intimate atmosphere he evokes while portraying the village and concentrates instead, on direct narration and comments. The sense of a sinister world from outside creeping into the village is now conveyed through certain subtle structural devices, and the reader is made aware of the fact that the evil in the village had been imported from the centres of political administration, and that howsoever legitimised and deeply entrenched, the world of Ramachandra Mangaraj is essentially foreign to the idyllic world of Bhagia and Saria. Ultimately it is a confrontation between natural and artificial social organisations, between the pastoral and the sophisticated, between the worlds of faith and craft, as impelled into being by certain historical forces. Bhagia and Saria, no less than Ramachandra Mangaraj and Champa, are not merely victims of their own instints and

weaknesses, they are also helpless counters of sweeping ethical and emotional ·changes brought into being by certain historical situations. But for Marhatta misrule and British administration, the legal net-work which is used by Ramanchandra Mangaraj and his likes as a we to catch and such dry the unwary peasants would not have been in existence.

While all the four novels of Fakirmohan have this broad historical orientation, in *Luchhama* he is tackling a specific historical situation and is concerned with some broad historical morals. Apparently this is similar to *Bibasini* which deals with Marhatta aggression during the 18th century. But the focus here convrges entirely on a different element than that in Ramashankar's novel contrasted to *Bibasini*. *Lachhama* reveals a conscious, and specific—as against a hazy, romantically idealised—approach to history. A reference to Bankim Chandra's historical romance would be relevant here. Bankim Chandra's historical romance on his own admission have been designed to evoke memories of a Hindu Golden Age. The conflict in almost all such novels of Bankim Chandra is between native Hindu kings and the alien Muslim power. Interestingly enough in Fakirmohan's *Lachhama*, a Hindu chieftain supports a Muslim ruler in his war against the Marhattas. The grand historical conflict depicted in the novel is between the declining Mughal dynasty and the rising Marhatta power. What the novel highlights is not the heroic feats of Hindus against Yavana power, but the valour of an Oriya chieftain in his engagement against the Marhattas as an ally of the Muslim ruler. The general picture of the time, specially that of the Oriya society, is one of decay and disintegration. Both Hindus and Muslims are presented in a state of political disarray and cultural degeneration, and the possibility of British occupation of India is hinted at Bankim Chandra's 'Anand Math' ends almost with the same note.

But the implications there are very different. *Anand Math* closes with the end of Muslim rule and the prophecy that Hindu power will be re-established after a period of British rule. In the context of Oriya literature, *Bibasini* too reveals a conscious attempt to romanticise the struggle against Marhatta misrule and to glorify the Oriya chieftains. Fakirmohan does not seek to romanticise the past of Orissa. He is engaged in exploring the process of decay of the Oriya society.

To start with, *Lachhama* was designed as a romance, Fakirmohan serialised it in the Utkal Sahitya under the title *A Strange Union*. This is also the title of the last chapter of Sarakar's *Padmamali*. But the two novels belong in reality, to two separate traditions. Sarakar is mainly interested in unfolding a romantic tale of love and union. The characters are permitted to inhabit a make-believe world where incredible events could take place. But though Fakirmohan sets out to narrate a story of private vendetta and romantic re-union, what he more positively builds is a realistic account of the crisis which overtook Oriya society during the 18th century. History here is no longer the nebulous background of *Bibasini*. It is the lived reality of a whole community, full of tensions and conflicts, more dramatic than the interaction among individual characters in a romance. Fakirmohan's sense of history as a dynamic process keeps surfacing in the novel and functions as a controlling principle in organising much of the romantic tale into a significant pattern. An analysis of the structure of the novel will bear this out.

The structure of *Lachhama* is designed to unify two major strands in the novel: one relating to large, epic conflicts where mighty forces collide with each other, empires rise and fall and whole cultures are destroyed, and the other comprising a personal drama of love and

honour, revenge and reunion. These two levels do not run parallel to each other as in *Bibasini*. The structural excellence of *Lachhama* is to be seen in their interaction and fusion. Of course, at the end of the novel is quietly handed over to romance : the plot involving love and revenge heads independently towards an artificial, melodramatic resolution. But before the popular, conventional strain takes over, Fakirmohan has already achieved an unprecedented artistic break-through in respect of the historical novel. In *Padmamali* and to a large extent in *Bibasini* the world of history and the world of romantic tale had remained apart. But in *Lachhama*, the romantic tale of revenge and reunion is made to grow out of the large process of historical conflict itself. It is partly resolved within this very process without leaning on the fantastic trappings of a romance. The machinery of romance is used only at the end of the novel, and the ending therefore, clearly appears to be contrived and mechanical.

The novel opens with a scene depicting the attack on a group of pilgrims from Western India by Marhatta Bargis. In this unequal fight most of the pilgrims die, and their property is looted by the Bargis. *Lachhama* the heroine of this novel, her husband, and his parents were among the pilgrims. She some how escapes the Bargis and is later found by the soldiers of the nearby fort of Raibania who take her to Mandhata, the ruler of the fort. She believes that her husband and in-laws have been murdered by the Bargis. She finds shelter in the palace of the Mandhata and the queen lavishes her affection on Lachhama. Soon after this, Pandit Siv Shankar Malvir arrives at the courts of the Mandhata to persuade him to support the Marhattas against the Muslim Nawab, Alibardi Khan. Through an extended argument between the priest of Mandhata's court and the Marhatta emissary, Fakirmohan presents a picture of Marhatta oppression and hints at the imminence of British rule. It is

significant that the priest categorically rejects the Hindu nationalist premises which only emphasize the alien status of Muslims and rather concentrates on the subject of the sufferings of ordinary men and women. This reveals Fakirmohan's essentially humanist outlook on history and rejection of a purely zingoistic or religious perspective. The Mandhata rejects the proposals for treaty and the emissary returns from his court, indignant and resolved to bring down terrible destruction upon him. In the mean time a war between the Nawab and the Marhattas begins and a large part of the Mandhata's army is sent out to fight on the side of the Nawab. The Marhattas mount a surprising attack on the fort which is not well protected, The fort is destroyed and Mandhata is taken a prisoner and later assassinated in Bhaskar Pandit's court at Nagpur when he refuses to bow down to him. His queen commits suicide by jumping into the palace pond. But before doing so, she sends away Lachhama through a secret passage who takes shelter in a village close by.

After the destruction of the fort of Raibania the novelist concentrates on depicting the war between the Muslims and the Marhattas. Lachhama is chased away by the villagers—the people think that she brings bad luck with her and impute the destruction of the fort to her presence there. She disguises herself as a male betel-seller and keeps moving with the army of Bhaskar Pandit which is now engaged in a protracted war against the Nawab, Attention is now focused on Lachhama's husband Badal Singh, who has survived the attack of the Bargis. He, too, believes that his wife and parents are dead and is seeking an opportune moment to avenge himself on Bhaskar Pandit. He moves with the Muslim army and once manages to save the life of the Nawab in a critical situation. Thereafter, he is elevated into an important position by the Nawab. After a series of engagements, the Nawab and Bhaskar Pandit decide upon a

parley to work out the terms of a treaty. As Bhaskar Pandit enters the tent to hold a discussion with the Nawab, all at once, Lachhama and Badal fall upon him from opposite sides and killed him. The Marhatta army is soon overpowered and scattered by the Nawab s soldiers.

The scence now shifts to Murshidabad. After the immediate political constraints of the Nawab are detailed out and the major historical concern the novel is rounded off, the romantic plot is further developed through a sensational stretch of separation and reunion of the lovers, and their mothers, at Gaya in unabashedly melodramatic terms and the novel is brought to a happy close.

The importance of such a structure has been grasped by critics of Oriya literature.[1] The way in which Fakirmohan fuses the conflict within the romantic tale with that of the larger historical forces is unique in Oriya literature. The personal drama of separation revenge and reunion is made a part of the grand conflict which involves the decay of Oriya feudalism. Dr. Mansing appreciatively compares the construction of Lachhama with that of Tolstoy's War and Peace. The dangers inherent in such a comparison are, of course, obvious. War and Peace has vast convas and comprises an epic saga of Russian life during the period of Nepoleonic wars. It is not merely an attempt to give a panoramic picture of Russian life in the 19th century in the face of a great historical crises but an attempt to understand the nature of historical reality itself in terms of universal human experience. It has multiplicity of level and the structure of the novel is supported by a vision of life and of history which it would be utterly

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1. Dr. Mayadhar Mansing, Saraswati Fakirmohan, 1972 P-283

wrong to expect in *Lachhama.* The ambitions of the writer of *Lachhama* are far more modest. He is interested in portraying the suffering of men in a decaying society, and in analysing the causes of this decay. Portrayal, of course, is more important here than analysis since Fakirmohan is unable to evolve a sophisticated explanatory framework. The historical outlook available to the 19th century Oriya mind would not make it possible. But, still a comparison between *Lachhama* and *War and Peace* would be relevant because it would identify the epic possibilities that are inherent though largely unrealised in the former.

War and Peace begins with a domestic atmosphere and deals with the life and love of individual characters. Then the novelist proceeds to depict the grand struggle of history which transforms the lives of individual characters in its mighty sweep. At the end, the novel again returns to the too little world of intimate human relations —a nursery-room atmosphere. Within this broad structure Tolstoy seeks to render intelligible, the forces which propel humanity forward. Some of his characters also achieve a personal vision of the relentless processes of history through intense suffering experienced through their participation in historical process itself. *Lachhama*, too, begins with an attack on a family which results in a separation of its survivors : two old woman and their children, Then follows a spectacle of war, intrigue and revenge. But placed alongside the wars which constitute a major portion of Tolstoy's *War and Peace* these wars are merely a series of sensational events. Their significance for the human agents who fight it out is either largely ignored or hardly understood. The novel then returns to a picture of domestic bliss and removes itself all at once to an entirely fictive plane to organise the romantic reunion of the lovers with their mothers.

It may not, then appear that there could be anytning more than a surface resemblance between the

two novels. But a deeper identity exists. Their fundamental affinity issues from the fact that like Tolstoy, Fakirmohan sees history as the transformation of the life of a whole community through conflict and suffering, a community, which is represented by vividly realised characters chosen from ordinary life. The novelist brings out the historical process through changes in the private destinies. History would not have come home in a properly literary form if it were limited to certain broad generalities for instance, the dialogue between the Marhatta emissary and the royal priest in the court of the Mandhata which offers a general indictment of Marhatta oppression and refers to the suffering of the common people, incorporates history in a broad referential pattern. This may be contrasted with the powerful projection of history through the meeting between Lachhama and Jaga Fateh Singh's mother. Historical process is rendered there into a part of the reader's personal experience through intensely moving, concrete, human terms, Jaga Fateh Singh's mother[1] is a mad old woman whose two sons have been killed in the war against the Marhattas. She grows, thereafter compulsively abusive and hostile; she is all the time shouting at objects and creatures. Even during the night she keeps her sense of outrage alive by quarreling with mosquitoes. For her the whole world is filled with Marhatta brigands. Her madness is so moving precisely because it is rendered as a tragic consequence of a historical situation. She sees Lachhama and takes her to be a Marhatta soldier in disguise: On finding her the old woman runs to the village and raises an alaram. The villagers take fright and flee into the forest to save themselves from the Bargis. In a few moments the village is completely deserted lying in a state of chaotic desolation. Fakirmohan's achievment here consists in his

1. Fakirmohan Senapati, op cit, ch-.16

ability to communicate the sense of immense suffering and deep-seated terror in a helpless oppressed people through apparently trivial incidents involving ordinary human beings. In an earlier chapter, he had given the description of an idyllic tribal village and its harmonious community life. Then he suddenly plunges the reader into an account of its devastation by the soldiers of the Nawab. Thus history becomes part of the felt reality of the people. *Bibasini* also depicts Marhatta oppression but it fails to crystallize the experience of a large suffering masses in specific characters and to portray the fate of ordinary human beings, and in its bid to be exciting, degenerates into melodrama. As has been noted, Das Khadanga, in Bibasini is not a fully realised character. He comes off as a broad, generalised representation of a martyr figure. The uniqueness of the portrayal of Jaga Fateh Singh's mother can be realised yet more fully when she is compared with Saradei in *Nila Saila*. As a woman full of passion and feeling, Saradei is an interesting character and her situation is touching, but in spite of an extended portrayal, the novelist fails to concentrate in her role the experience of a tragic historical reality. Her complex psychological responses are not a product of history; her link with history is often strenuously emphasised by the author, but she lives as only an interesting character, not as a historical personality.

It is difficult to divide the characters in *Lachhama* into two exclusive groups, pertaining to the two major directions in which the novel grows. This is yet another indication of the artistic superiority of Fakirmohan over his predecessors and contemporaries, and of his superb sense of form, He has brought in a few characters who are actual historical figures and has created the other in accordance with the demands of his plot. Alibardi Khan, Bhaskar Pandit and some of their generals are historical

personages. While delineating them the author maintains fidelity to the historical facts and within this frame work succeeds in imparting to them the vitality of characters in a work of art. He has also imaginatively created characters such as Mandhata, Badal Singh, Jaga Fateh Singh's mother, Lachhama etc. Though they are not actual historical figures, Mandhata and Jaga Fateh Singh's mother are historical in the most dynamic and vital sense: they objectify in individual human forms the process and experience of a national tragedy, Fakirmohan makes their link with the romantic tale in the novel credible and convincing. They are not used merely to provide the romance figures as a background of historical reality a pattern that has been observed both in Sarakar and Rama Shankar.

Characters in *Lachhama* who belongs to the romance tradition have also been firmly fixed in its essentially realistic context. They do not exhibit the abstract quality that it is found to a marked extent in the characters in *Bibasini* for *Padmamali*. But at the same time, some attempt on the part of Fakirmohan to idealise a few of his characters can also be discerned. Lachhama is beautiful and chaste, Badal Singh is endowed with physical charm, valour, determination and devotion to his wife, Mandhata is an epitome of courage and generosity, and so on, Lachhama and Badal Singh could be easily accommodated in Padamamali or Bibasini as characters since, in a way, they, too; work out the mythological motif of a chaste woman getting back her husband after a period of protracted suffering. But the total experience of the novel does not allow for such an isolation of its characters from the course of events, except for the very last phase. Until the 26th chapter, its romance figures are inseparable from the historical context and its structure makes possible the resolution of the romantic tale within the ambit of the resolution of the

historical conflict. The story of Badal Singh's personal revenge is made a part of historical drama, he is only an instrument in the hands of the Nawab who wishes to get rid of Bhaskar Pandit through an act of betrayal.

Unlike Rama Shankar and Umesh Chandra who depend upon the report of the narrative voice while delineating characters, Fakirmohan exercises greater restraint and gives his characters a distinct individuality. The description of the characters is reduced to a minimum and they are often allowed to express themselves through their dialogues with others. The dialogues are not artifical and long-winded as they are in *Padmamali* and *Bibasini*. The soliloquies which the characters occasionally use also allow the reader to accept them as individual human beings with private, personal wishes of their own and not ideaiised figures personifying virtues and voices, But, of course, Fakirmohan has not achieved unqualified success; nor has he been able to keep his characterisation consistently controlled and objective. After Lachhama disguises herself as a batel-seller, for instance, the portrayal of her character becomes sentimental and unconvincing, The novelist seems then to wholly yield to the temptations of romance, first encounter, while assassinating Bhaskar Pandit, Badla Singh and Lachhama disguised as a betel-seller embrace each other in Alibardi's court, and yet fail to recognise each other.[1] Fakirmohan keeps them artificially separated for eight more chapters only because he wishes to provide a long-drawn-out finale, dripping with sentiment and thick with sensation.

The narrative voice in Lachhama deserves a special appreciation. It displays a remerkable sense of proportion and restraint. Unlike the narrative voice in *Padmamali* it is not self-conscious, nor is it morally

1. Fakirmohan Senapati, op cit, ch.35

ostentatius or flippant like the narrative voice in *Bibasini*. The author maintains a fine balance between narration and the free development of characters through dramatic dialogues. Moral reflections and metaphysical comments are reduced to a minimum and historical references are incorporated at points in the narrative where they are directly relevant. After giving a vivid dramatic delineation of the event of the misfortune of the piligrims Fakirmohan proceeds to give a general picture of decay and its causes. The author's realism keeps the narrative voice from indulging unnecessarily in moral or metaphysical speculations. However, the impulse towards moral and metaphysical speculation becomes manifest in two occasions in the novel. In Chapter—7, the narrative voice talks at length on the flux of time before it deals with Lachhama's mental condition after she has been separated from her husband and taken shelter in Mandhata's palace. In the last chapter similarly, it seeks to illustrate the operation of poetic justice in human life. It confides to the reader that in a way the father of Badal Singh deserved his fate, because at one time in his life he, too, was engaged in plundering people.

But the tenor of the novel as a whole and the wistful note on which the novel closes indicate a deeper awareness of the nature of reality which resists easy moral or metaphysical formulations. The narrative voice in *Lachhama* reveals a capacity for assuming a variety of tones-formal, colloquial, meditative, analytical to render its situations and characters. It treats almost all the historical figures from the outside and does not explore their inner lives. Nor does it take a definite moral attitude towards them. Both sides of the conflict are treated more or less dispassionately. The murder of Bhaskar Pandit can be taken as a case in point. In the sphere of history in the novel, it is a part of Alibardi Khan's intrigue, not a part of any moral pattern in the novelists mind. But from Badal Singh's point of view, the event is

one that slakes his thirst for revenge. But even here, Bhaskar Pandit is more a symbol of Marhatta oppression than a particular individual responsible for Badal Singh's specific misfortune. By not getting too much involved with any particular side the narrative voice preserves a remarkable detachment. But, at the same time, its inadequacy while delineating momentous conflicts of history cannot also be overlooked. Fakirmohan's account of the fall of the fort of Raibania reads like a neswpaper report[1]. It fails to bring out the tremendous significance of this event. The description of the wars fought between the Marhattas and the Muslims are, similarly, too flat to reveal the epic nature of the engagements. In point of fact, they represent the struggle between the decaying Muslim dynasty and the rising Marhatta power. The narrative voice only chooses to concentrate on the gruesome, repulsive physical details of the battlefield. Except for the two chapters—and they are extraordinarily evocative—it largely fails to project a convincing inclusive picture of the popular life of the time. Much of it is merely reported in the tirade of the royal priest who seeks to impress upon the emissary of Bhaskar Pandit the extent of Marhatta misrule. It may be argued that Fakirmohan's realism was eminently suited to the needs of social satire, and that it was unable to support the vast historical vision.

This brings one to a discussion of the nature and significance of Fakirmohan's historical awareness. It is quite clear that unlike his predecessors. Fakirmohan is possessed of a high degree of historical consciousness—a consciousness of history as a process involving conflict decay and revival. What is important is the way this consciousness finds expression in the novel, which is a work of art. One can easily see that the awareness of a great culture, the process of its disintegration and

1. Fakirmohan Senapati, of cit. ch—14

eclipse pervades the novel as a kind of tragic atmosphere. The novel shows this process affecting and controlling individual destinies. The business of war dominates the novel and described realistically in terms of a strategy, success and failure. Neither side is romanticised or elevated as is done in a romance. This includes the delineation of a tragic historical consequence : the fall of the fort of Raibania which symbolises the eclipse of Oriya feudalism. It is only later that the novel turns to pure romance, the union of a separated couple through a number of coincidences. It is largely due to this pressure of the historical consciousness that the final phase of romance in the novel is felt to be distressingly contrived and unnatural. And, yet it should not be forgotton that the controlling framework of the novel is that of romance, strangely enough, romance forms the basis of a developed historical consciousness in the novel. This historical consciousness has two major components : the characters, experience and awareness of history and the narrator's conception of time.

For most of the characters in the novel history is the immediate experience of war, devastation and oppression. The people are too much a part of the tragic process to understand its deeper implications. But the way this process is individualised and made specific is very touching indeed. The description of the devastation of a small tribal village may be recalled in this connection. Fakirmohan also succeds in making it a part of the individual's tragic experience. The case of Jaga Fateh Singh's mother can be cited again. She loses her two sons in the war against the Marhattas. She tries to persuade her sons to hide themselves away in the forest and not to join the war. But they don't obey her and meet their death in the war, Their mother goes mad and quarrels with men in the daytime and with bedbugs and mosquitoes at night. She suspects Lachhama to be a

Marahatta soldier in disguise and raises an alaram which results in the precipitate flight of the panicstricken villagers into the neighbouring forest. The creation of such a character who crystalises in herself the tragic experience of a whole community at a particularl painful moment in the history of Orissa is really an extraordinary imaginative feat.

Some other characters in the novel are endowed with an understanding of the process of history and display a certain detachment in their attitude towards the past. The extended argument between the royal priest and the Marhatta emissary in the eleventh chapater in the novel is revealing in this context. This chapter, in fact, dramatises the clash between two interpretations of history: the secular and the religious. The Marhatta emissary sees the history of India in terms of Hindu Nation fighting against aliens to assert its indentity and revive its glorious culture, He invokes the name of Shivaji and his struggle against Muslim supremacy. But the royal priest emphasised the degeneration of both Muslims and Hindus and concentrates on the fact of the oppression of common people. He speaks of the inevitability of the decay of these two powers since both have violated basic human principles through oppression and injustice. He prophesises the advent of British rule and believes that it would welcome mainly because christianity recognises the equality of all men, as does English secular culture. As has already been emphasised, Fakirmohan's vision is remarkably free from a religious world-view. It is a broadly secular and humanist outlook which recognises the inevitability of progress, the decline of the old orders, and the emergence of a more humane order out of the ruins of the past. One is led to feel that the detachment with which the royal priest views the decline of the past order and welcomes the future may indicate that Fakirmohan is treating this

decline as a necessary one. In any case, it is important to recognise that one of the main attractions of this novel resides in Fakirmohan's essentially creative liberal-humanistic view of history.

But the claim that Fakirmohan is aware of history as a relentless process of change in which decline of one order is necessary and inevitable must be qualified. In the introductory chapters it has already been pointed out that historicism of the 19th century Europe does not recognise any order of reality outside the framework of time and space. History is viewed as an all embracing purpose which contains and defines reality. But in *Lachhama* the narrative voice seems to recognise two orders; the human and the divine. It tends to treat the process of change as illusory, as a part of a divine changeless reality.

In chapter—7 the narrative voice distinguishes between two kinds of time and makes use of an image which is evocative and significant. Cosmic time is represented by a potter's wheel which remains where it is even while it moves. Human time is symbolised by the innumerable pots which are shaped by this and which are destroyed every day. Human time for Fakirmohan is not the only process. He relates it to the unchanging cosmic principle which is the source of movement but does not participate in time's processes. When the characters refer to fate or some invisible divine order as controlling human events there seems to be nothing wrong there because their consciousness, bound as they are by historical limits, is necessarily limited. But when the narrative voice makes a distinction between a timeless time and human historical time and presents one as emanating from the other, the division between reality as metaphysical and reality as historical is blurred. This renders the writer's conception of the historical process problematic. This is a question which is ultimately

related to the growth of historical consciousness in Orissa as a part of the Indian outlook. We shall have to return to this problem while discussing *Nila Saila* by Surendra Mohanty.

Between Fakirmohan's *Lachhama* and Surendra Mohanty's '*Nila Saila*' a number of historical romances appeared on the Oriya literary scene. Their appearance signified a continuing interest in the past and a tendency to use the novel-form as a medium for teaching history. As accomplished works of art, their limitation are very much apparent. But their importance lies in the fact that they continued a tradition and offer valuable insights into the average Oriya writer's conception of the relation between history and fiction.

In 1925 Ramchandra publishes *Kamala Kumari*. Its subject matter has been collected from a Telugu translation of a Marathi novel. The author does not find it incumbent upon himself to attempt a faithful delineation of historically certified facts. Rather he counters by arguing that historians themselves are not always unanimous on the so-called 'facts' and therefore, by implication, the legendary quality of his novel is not in need of any defence or apology. A more interesting point to be noted in his prefatorial comments relates to the importance of the tradition of historical novels in Oriya by his time, This tradition seems to have grown predominant enough to make him emphasise that the subject matter of a novel need not always be based on history. If one reads this statement as referring only to historical novels, the emphasis is interesting for the writer is now asserting his rights to imaginative freedom in that context. No doubt, this may be quite unexceptionable, but what is important to note here in the preface is that Acharya is side-tracking the main issue of integrating historical truth with imaginative veracity he is oblivious of the deeper questions relating to the process of histor and of man's destiny as a part of it.

Kamala Kumari has the impact of a romance tale contrived against the background of some historical matter. A certain legendary, puranic quality is evident even from the title of certain chapters. There is, of course, a constant preoccupation with historical events and personalities. It is a fine specimen of what can be called romantic historicism, romantic elements are grafted upon a few historical events and the historical events are themselves designed for a romantic appeal. This is the ground on which the popularity of the novel rests. It is a patriotic romance. There is a neat sense of structure and deft manipulation of suspense, but not for unfolding a historical process. In fact, the main concern of the historical novel is not much in evidence here.

More significant is the attempt of Dayanidhi Mishra whose *'Sanjukta'* and *'Rana Pratap'* show a more positive historical ardour. Mishra is interested in not only writing some historical romances but also interpreting history through his novels. Thus in his *Rana Pratap*, he seeks to with obvious patrotic zeal—effect a revision of the traditional image of Akbar. Again, he is all the time watchful to point at cause and effect relationships of broad historical developments. While glorifying its protagonist by means of certain romance-features, *Rana Pratap* yet manages to create the impact of profound historicity by involving the reader in certain historical debates of a fundamental kind—these details are never felt to be digressive for they are central to the delineation of character. If only all these were psychologically and thematically fused in a more compact manner, the novels would have achieved high excellence. As it is, although they are not digressive or rambling in character and are basically related to the main subject of the novel, yet they stand out as separate thrusts : one generally historical and the other biographical. All the same it is necessary to recognise that Sri Mishra is the first novelist of Orissa who is out to exploit the medium of

the novel for a certain kind of pedagogical purpose (that is why, the novels featured as text-books for students for a number of years) History is used to create engaging novels of character and the novel form is used to teach history with a patriotic bias. The chaste and controlled poetic style of the author helps create the right tone for his historical novel—one that is designed to generate a definite historical interest as it interests as a novel. Unfortunately, Sri Mishra did not have the requisite creative breadth to tackle extended historical tracts or inclusive human pictures. His attention is primarily focussed on individual protagonists. There is only large area of 'historical' pre-occupation the fate of the Hindu Nation. History in itself as a process—not as a national saga, but as an intellectual metaphysical construct. This is nowhere in evidence in his novels. Otherwise in respect of historical novels he is certainly far more interesting than Ramachandra Acharya who is merely interested in entertaining the reader with an exciting romantic tale. Sri Mishra has a critical dimension but only on a limited scale. In essentials, however, he does constitute an advance.

'1817' by Godabarish Mishra is an adaptation of Dickens's *'A Tale of Two Cities'*. But it is an adaptation with a difference. In *'A Tale of Two Cities'* history is largely a tragic background and the reader's attention is focussed on the personal tragedy of a few characters. In *'1817'* history actively shapes the distiny of most of the characters. This indicates a maturer historical consciousness of the author. In this book Mishra seeks to dramatise the experience of the Paika rebellion which took place in the year 1817. A number of imaginary characters are set against a background of broadly true historical events. Some of the events are also purely fictive. But whereas in *'A Tale of Two Cities'* personal fate of characters occupy the readers attention, in *'1817'* the experience of

characters offer insights into the process of decline of a whole community. Mishra succeeds in doing this by creating a few characters like Champa who concentrate in themselves the experience of history. But, it is clear, that the novelist has not been able to fully develop the human dimension in the novel and it seems he is out to teach history with a patriotic fervour. On the whole, this novel does not constitute significant advance upon the fact-fiction dichotomy facing the Oriya historical novelist.

Historical romances as they are written even today conform to this broad pattern : They either seek to use history as a romantic background which would give their characters an exotic appeal or try to use the novel as a medium for teaching history. Consequently the fact fiction dichotomy remains largely unresolved. Santi Mohapatra's *Nur Jahan* published in 1972 may provide an illustration. In her preface she claims that like a specialist she has gone through the pages of Mogul history to collect material for her novel. Her job has been that of imaginative recasting of the dry facts of history into a moving novel. But in reality, she presents a set of historical events connected with the nature of the protagonist, These events do not constitute a process and in consequence it appeals primarly as a romantic tale about the life of Nurjahan, not as a historical novel.

Nila Shaila

Padmamali had revealed the writer's uneasiness in reconciling facts of history with the demands of an imaginative story. It showed a superimposition of certain facts of history over a romantic tale, and the narrative voice sought to make the former an aspect of the latter. Planning a historical novel on a far more ambitious scale and displaying much greater artistic assurrance, Surendra Mohanty writes his *Nila Shaila.*[1] in 1966-eighty years after Sarakar had made his first tentative foray in that direction. But on the basic issue of proper harmonisation of fact and fiction, history and art, *Nila-Shaila* does not constitute a significant advance over *Padmamali*. Mohanty, like Sarakar, is acutely self-conscious about the task at hand, and like him seeks to highlight the quality of his effort in his prefaces. Like Sarakar, again, and unlike Fakirmohan or Ramashankar, he considers it necessary to make the claim that he has written a proper historical novel and seeks to define the genre in his own individual style.

His prefaces suggest an absolute distinction between history and historical novel. As he sees it, historical novel implies a search for the eternal flow of life within the ambit of history. It appears that he is not interested in exploring history as a set of facts, but as a process that underlies and perhaps, transcends history. Such a conception of the historical novel, though here it is couched in a much more sophisticated terminology is not really very different from Sarakar's formulation eight decades earlier. History as something external to the world of fiction is precisely what Sarakar suggested when

1. Surendra Mohanty, Nila Shaila, Cuttack Students Store, Cuttack, 1966

he spoke of the need to reconcile historical truth with that of entertaining the reader with formally satisfying fictional structures. That history itself could set off or enshrine an individual creative vision of life, or, that a certain creative exploration could find a satisfying significant objectification through some vision of history, does not furnish the authors the aesthetic assurance necessary for writing a successful historical novel.

But this is not to say that *Nila Shaila* as a work of art is of the same order or kind as *Padmamali.* They are separated by almost a century and belong to two different cultural contexts. While Sarakar congratulates himself on being a pioneer, Mohanty is keenly conscious of the pressure on him of a rich tradition of the novel which has produced Fakirmohan's *Lachhama.* His is a much more complex achievement and requires a far more careful and extended analysis. But the conception of the historical novel which underlines the formulations in the prefaces to different editions of his novel show his proximity to. Sarakar The preconception in question affects the structure and meaning of his novel, and therefore, merits close discussion. This conception shows the level of Mohanty's historical consciousness, and in many ways determines his attitudes and his treatment of the past. But Mohanty's affinity with Fakirmohan must be borne in mind as one goes to analyse the prefaces to *Nila Shaila.* This affinity may be seen to be reflacted even in broad patterns of career. For instance, Fakirmohan begins his career as a novelist by exploring Oriya society of his times, and then builds a novel on a specific past. Surendra Mohanty, too, begins by portraying the process of decay in contemporary society in his *Andha Diganta* and then seeks to explore the crisis in the History of Orissa in the 18th century, Such similarities in their respective careers, however, should not be pressed too much, for the simple reason

that Mohanty doesnot have the consistency of Fakirmohans creative engagement.

The prefatorial remarks attached to the two a editions of *Nila Shaila* clarify the nature of Mohanty's endeavour. The introduction to the first edition has four distinct aspects. The first section in it deals briefly with the profound centrality of Jaganath in the Oriya national psyche. This as well as the title of the novel—which is a poetic reference to Jagannath, borrowed from Oriya devotional poetry imply that the novel is largely concerned with the significance of Lord Jagannath as the national deity of Orissa. The second part discusses the importance of Lord Jagannath in the political history of the state, Having properly grasped the significance of this part the Kings of Orissa adopted the tradition of acknowledging Lord Jagannath as the real King and the Gajapati as his vassal. The divinity or the Gajapati King and his being the symbol of national aspiration and political glory of the Oriyas, thus acquired an immediacy that was hard to come by elsewhere. In the third section the author speaks of King Ramachandra Dev the protracted struggles of this lonely Oriya King to protect the honour of Lord Jagannath and, by implication, to secure the political independence of Orissa. To the author, this struggle is both a sensational drama and as inspiring saga of national resurgence. Apart from being an exciting historical event in itself, it is also weighted with relevance to contemporary reality—a subject which the author has already explored in his *Andha Diganta.* But this could also indicate the author's conscious intention to appeal to, or exploit, a certain devotional fervour of Oriya reading public in producing a moving historical novel. In fact, in his 1970 preface the author candidly attributes the popularity of his novel to the profuse love

1. Surendra Mohanty, Introduction to Nila Shaila, Cuttack Students' Store, Cuttack, 1966.

the Oriya raading public bears for Lord Jagannath. But an analysis of the novel would show that far from being a merit, this has reduced the possibilities of *Nila Shaila* not only as a historical novel, but more generally as a novel proper, too. In the same section, again the author correlates the incompleteness of his novel to the incompleteness of life itself. This profound equation seems to be a little facile, and tends to overlook the complexities of a work of art and its essential difference from life. One feels that Mohanty is aware of a certain artistic deficiency is his novel and is merely trying to cover it up by adducing some profound arguments : the author, he claims, in an impartial mouthpiece of the natural processes of life. He seems to forget, however, that unless such an openendedness is based on a superior inclusive vision and an elaborate structure as in *War and Peace*, the incompleteness would be too gaping, and would glaringly exhibit the failure of the artist to meaningfully projects the historical reality. The fourth section deals with the historical period which constitutes the background of the novel. The novelist emphasises here that history is secondary in *Nila Shaila* meaning by history a set of documents about the past and not a process which ambraces the past as well as the present. His primary concern in the novel, as he puts it, is to project the determination of the Oriya nation to survive through a critical moment of history. It need hardly be underscored that such a portrayal of a whole society in a period of transition is precisely what the great historical novels have attempted. Thus, it could have been a most significant and unprecedented creative success as a historical novel in Oriya. But the reasons why the special bite of the genre would be missing from *Nila Shaila* are not far to seek. One of the main reason for this is to be discovered in the statement of Mohanty in the same preface which reveals a peculiar attitude

towards this transition. The struggle of a society to survive is sought to be presented by him in the abstract —that is to say, as one of those standard variations on the theme of "an eternal struggle' in which man fights against the enemies of humanity. The process of time does not bring about any qualitative change in the nature or direction of this struggle. What the author has in mind is perhaps something like the 'general human condition' and not the 'historical process'. This shows why, whatever may have been the degree of its success as prose fiction, as historical novel proper it does not constitute much of a radical, fruitful departure from the tradition set by Sarakar.

In the 1970 preface to his novel[1], the author states his position yet more unambiguiously. He claims that though *Nil Shaila* is prepared as a historical novel, what impresses the reader most deeply is not its historical quality. In the same preface he would assert that a historical novel is not history : it represents a search for the 'eternal flow of life' which underlises history. This is a promising orientation, no doubt. But the unwillingness to accept the 'eternal flow of life' as manifesting itself in significant historical patterns results in a dichotomy in the novel : its general human delineation and historical projection remain unfused. The novel does not show a successful projection of this 'eternal flow of life' in history. On the other hand, the experience of the different characters in it fail to give forth something so profound as the 'eternal flow of life'. This implies an unfortunate cleavage between history and novel in *Nila Shaila*. Instead of dramatising his theme through the interaction of certain vividly realised characters, the novelist concentrates on creating a poetic

1. Surendra Mohanty, Preface to the Second Edition, Nila Shaila, C. S. Store, Cuttack 1970.

atmosphere through lyrical descriptions and lavish use of images and metaphors. The author explicitly states that he seeks to convey the suffering of Oriya society in the 18th century through the character of Saradei, who, he says, has issued directly from his creative subconscious. Thus, she belongs more to the world of poetry in the novel than to the world of action.

Reduced to its bare essentials *Nila Shaila* reveals a very limited world of action. Very little really happens in this novel inspite of its considerable length. Much of the historical matter that could have furnished exciting action to the novel are kept in the background, and brought in as extended reminisconces and flashbacks. Most action, that is to say has already taken place before the novel begins. Ram Chandra Dev, its protagonist, has lost the war against the Muslims because of the betrayal of Bakshi Benu Bhramarbar, an upstart who aspires to usurp the throne of Khurdha. Ram Chandra Dev has been taken a prisoner, and only to save the honour of Lord Jagannath from Muslim vandalism, he marries Taki Khan's sister and embraces Islam. This infuriates his Queen who leaves with her grown-up son to her father's house, and conspires against the King. Bakshi Benu Bhramarbar engages in intrigues to supplant the king as the rightful supervisor of the temple of Lord Jagannath. Taki Khan, on his part is not deceived by Ram Chandra Dev's conversion and looks for an opportunity to plunder the wealth of the Jagannath temple, This is the situation against which the novel seeks to build its main action of protecting the image of Lord Jagannath from the hands of the infidels—an action which occupies the novel after four fifths of its space is already exhausted in depicting the many poltical intrigues and Ram Chandra Dev's helplesness and alienation.

The novel begins its action with Ram Chandra Dev holding a secret parley and conspiring with Bishnu

Parichha, a priest of the temple to regain his control over the affairs of the Jagannath temple. He has two problems : to keep Taki Khan away from Lord Jagannath who is the symbol of solidarity for the Oriyas, and to foil the attempts of Bakshi to occupy the throne of Khurdha. He succeeds in regaining his status as the living representative of Lord Jagannath by means of a shrewd design. Bishnu Parichha sees a dream in which the Lord chides him for having kept His representative away from Him just because he became polluted through his contact with infidels. Through his advice there is ensured for a while, the steady growth of popular acceptance of Ram Chandra Dev, a thing that renders Taki Khan helpless. The king, in the mean time, destroys Bakshi through another intrigue. He intercepts a letter from the Bakshi to his queen in which Bakshi asked her to plunder the revenue from the hands of Taki Khan's soldiers when they pass through Ram Chandra Dev's territory. This, he suggests would naturally make Taki Khan suspicious of Ram Chandra Dev and remove him from their way, Ram Chandra Dev loots the money and when Taki Khan proceeds to attack him, presents the letter to him and pleads complete innocence. Bakshi and his followers are summarily executed, But the peace thus gained is short-lived, and Taki Khan sends Amin Chand, to control the affairs of the temple. Amin Chand in turn, plans to oust Ram Chandra Dev from the throne and replace him by his son. Bhagirathi Kumar, as a puppet king. Now in the culminating piece of action. Ram Chandra Dev secretly removes the idols of the Lord from the sanctum and hids them away on in an island in Chilika.

This historical action is supplemented by a sub-plot in the novel. The sub-plot involves the actions of two characters chosen from ordinary life : Saradei and Jaguni. They contribute to the main action of the novel at the three crucial points. Saradei saves the king when

a Muslim soldier throws a spear at him, she steals the letter from the solders of Bakshi when they take shelter in her tavern and sends it to the king; and in the end, Jaguni helps the king and his band of loyal followers to find a suitable island in Chilika to hide away the idols. But the author seeks to give the sub-plot a measure of independence, since it is part of his intention to make it express the rhythems of popular life, its suffering and helplessness. The husband of Saradei dies in the war against Muslims to save the honour of the king of Orissa and Lord Jagannath. The King, chased by Muslim soldiers seeks shelter in her house and she saves his life by risking her own. Then she leaves her village and sets up a road-side tavern with the help of another lonely creature Jaguni. She manages to steal the letter from the soldiers of Bakshi and thus becomes instrumental in resolving a major conflict in the novel. Then one day, an attempt of rape is made upon her by a Muslim soldier, and she has to leave the village in shame. She sets up another tavern near the Chilika lake. This ugly incident slowly alienates Jaguni from her and he does not tell her anything about his participation in the search for a hide-out for Lord Jagannath. This is ironical, since Saradei has been repeatedly expressing her deep longing for a glimpse of Lord Jagannath. The idols are kept in her tavern on a stormy night and are removed next morning without her knowledge. The novelist makes her death towards the end of the novel gain deep pathos through this irony. This is how the sub-plot is allowed to function.

Surendra Mohanty seeks to support the grand design of a historical novel on the sub-structure of a few intrigues. As a result, his novel lacks motion and depends for its charm mostly upon a poetic atmosphere and style which does not grow out of the action itself.

1. Surendra Mohanty, opc it, p—21

The conflict within the novel is obviously political one. It involves a certain struggle of the Oriya society against internal decay and external enemies. The Jagannath temple is the centre of this political conflict, and Ram Chandra Dev's attempts to keep the idols untainted has distinct political implications[1]. In fact, at one point in the novel, Ram Chandra Dev feels guilty of having used Jagannath as a pawn on the political chees-board[2]. This becomes more clear if one contrasts Ram Chandra Dev's point of view with that of Bakshi. For Bakshi it is a plain and simple game of power and religion is at best a handmaid of politics. Amin Chand too, suggests the need to distinguish religion from politics. But the novelist, who identifies himself with Ram Chandra Dev, reveals an ambiguous attitude towards the conflict and tends to spiritualise it. There is no attempt within the novel to dramatise the struggle of man against his antagonist of which the novelist speaks in the Preface. One is left with the portrayal of a political conflict and a poetic atmosphere which is juxtaposed with it without consistent attention to its congruousness at all points. This finally results in a shift of emphasis from a dramatic representation of a historical conflict through powerfully drawn characteres to the creation of a poetic atmosphere which will convey both a sense of decay and the timeless spiritual value embodied by Lord Jagannath. This shift of emphasis is most clearly manifest in the novelist's delineation of characters, the use of narrative voice, and the image and symbols deployed in the novel.

Characters in *Nila Shaila* can be divided into two groups : actual historical figures and fictive personalities to project the rhythms of the popular life of the time. There is no world of romance in the novel to which the imaginatively created characters contribute. Most of the actual historical figures—Ram Chandra Dev, Taki Khan,

1. Surendra Mohanty, op cit, p—21

2. Surendra Mohanty, op cit, p—418

Bakshi, Amin Chand—belong to the world of the political intrigue. A host of other characters Saradei, Jaguni, the villagers—give a sense of the ordinary life of the period. But while the author is self-consciously accurate in delineating the historical event in the novel, he seeks to give his characters associated with it depth and individuality by trying to present their reflactive inner salves. Historical experience, thus, is simultaneously viewed from two separate angles in the novel : that of the narrative voice which comments upon various aspects of a period of decline in the history of Orissa[1] and of some characters who becomes victims of this decline and try to resist it. Such a double perspective is rich with possibilities for a historical novel. But it will be seen that the novelist's intentaion obtrudes too often, and individual experience and the world of history exist as two separate spheres in the novel for the most part.

Nila Shaila is too much obsessed with individual personality of its protagonist. Ram Chandra Dev is portrayed as a lonely wanderer, engaged in a heroic struggle to project the honour of Lord Jagannath, the symbol of spiritual and political glory of the Oriya people. But in the novel he participates in only two real actions, forestalling the intrigue of Bakshi Benu Bhramarbar Ray, and, at the end of the novel, removing the idols from the temple to hide them away in an island in Chilika. In the rest of the novel he is shown, for the most part, absorbed in raminiscences and ruminations. There is also a third dimension to his character : his amorous responses. In the absense of any conflict to carry the action forward, reminiscences and sensuous delight in female beauty create a lyrical atmosphere in the novel. For instance, in Ch-3 of the first section of the novel his war against Muslims is presented to the reader through his reminiscences, as he is engaged in playing a game of chess,

1. Surendra Mohanty, op cit. p.74

Strategies and vicissitudes of an actual battle are dramatically transformed into those of a game of chess. His encounter with the two women in the novel, too, gives the novelist abundant scope for lyricism. The reader is then withdrawn for a while from the world of war, intrigue and murder to a poetic description of Ram Chandra Dev's weakness for beauty. His weakness for Saradei is referred to time and again in the novel through extremely evocative images[1] and his relationship with Taki Khan's sister Rizia comes out to be typical romance story of a wistful prince, pitted against a hostile world, and his romantic beloved. They tend to stand out of the timebound world of history in the novel.

But the novelist concentrates more single-mindedly on another aspect of his charactér : his alienation from Lord Jagannath. This is depicted in the novel as a source of acute inner conflict and spiritual anguish. After getting converted into Islam in order to save the temple of the Lord from depredations, Ram Chandra Dev is divested of his privilege of representing Lord Jagannath in the tempóral world. Politically this implies his alienation from the people of Orissa who consider the King of Orissa to be a representative of Lord Jagannath. The novelist is aware of this and makes explicit references in the novel to a similar apprehension on the part of Ram Chandra Dev. But this apprehension is mostly presented as an intense spiritul anguish. This spiritual agony, however, only contributes to the poetic atmosphere in the novel, since it is never a part of the historical conflict. At one point in the narrative Ram Chandra Dev himslf feels guilty of having used Lord Jagannath as a means to his political ends. But, at other times he expresses his spiritual ecstasy and his longing to dissolve his indentity in His infinite mercy. The relationship between Lord Jagannath and the King thus appears as the

1. Surendra Mohanty, op cit, p—108 and 109

yearning of an individual tormented by the processes of time to merge himself into the timeless world of divine ecstasy. This, again, is the concern of poetry which gives glimpses of the experience of a world which transcends time. But such an experience is bound to stand outside the world of a historical novel whose major concern is to render a sense of the historical process. But, time and again in the novel, the novelist stresses this alienation. The novel opens with the protagonist's agony for having been alienated from his God. It ends with yet another image of alientation : the king is politely asked by the priest to step aside when offerings are made to Lord Jagannath in the small island in Chilika. He has lost his religion and, therefore, his right to be near his God, That is to say, he has lost his very identity. All his reflections in the novel lead him to a lyrical description of the grace of Lord Jagannath. In doing so, the novelist fails to portry him properly as a character shaped by the process of history—as subject and object of history—and ends up by converting him into an inadequate symbol of the finite man's quest for the timeless.

The author's near-obsessive pre-occupation with the inner spiritual life of the protagonist offers him limited scope for adequately developing the other characters in the novel. Except for Saradei in the sub-plot., no other character is shown to be possessed of a complex inner life. In the Preface, the author claims that Saradei is a creation of his own sub-conscious self and she symbolises the trial and suffering of the people of Orissa in a moment of historical crisis. But a study of her character in its relation to the action of the novel would show that basically the conception of her character is poetic and personal, rather than being objective and historical. Mohanty intends to create a character which will concentrate in itself the larger historical experience in homely terms. Earlier, Fakirmohan's exceptional success in creating such a character in *Lachhama*

has already been discussed. Jaga Fateh Singh's mother does not move the reader merely because she represents a helpless, suffering human being but because her suffering grows out of a specific historical situation of which she is herself not much aware. Mohanty is careful enough to link Saradei's life with history at various points in the narrative. Her husband and other male members of her family die in the war against Muslims to save the honour of Lord Jagannath. She tries to save Ram Chandra Dev from the spear of a Muslim soldier by risking her own life. As the owner of a road-side tavern she is made a silent spectator of the changing facts of social reality : the dacoits, the British, the Muslim soldiers. To justify her presence in the novel the author also makes her contribute to the main action. She steals Bakshi's letter to the Queen and sends it to Ram Chandra Dev. But with all this connection with the main action, she comes off more as a tragic individual in her alienation, her longings and her suffering, than as a character embodying a historical situation. One may also contrast her with another mistress of a road side tavern, in *1817* to see the difference. The latter, too, is created as a moving individual,but always with the pressure of history behind her. Saradei—particularly at moments when she is most alive and most moving—remains a romantic study of a tragic heroine rather than being a historical study of human suffering. The author is too much engrossed in the sub-conscious—and hence, the pre-occupation with the female side of her character, her longings, her sexual violation etc—to be able to concentrate on the historical aspect, which is more referred to or prepared for than realised. Of course, a symbolic reading can be pressed into service to hold out her historical dimension. Thus, the rape by a Muslim soldier and her alienation from Jaguni may be made out to be symbolic and the suffering and helplessness of the whole Oriya society may be seen through the suffering and humiliation of Saradei as an

individual. But even this would not ultimately help. As the delineation of her life at the end of the novel makes it clear, she belongs more properly to the poetic atmosphere in the novel. She is moving, no doubt, but not as a historically compelling projection.

Saradei impresses the reader not because she illuminates the process of history through her suffering. She is so touching primarily because the novelist portrays her as a lonely, unfulfilled woman, This aspect of her character has been stressed repeatedly in the novel. Her encounter with Ram Chandra Dev at the beginning of the novel is essentially a romantic encounter. He enters her sub-conscious and intensifies her need for love. Until the end of the novel he remains the ideal lover for her, In Bhagirathi Kumar she is quick to recognise his father Ram Chandra Dev. Her desires are aroused and the reader anticipates some interesting dramatic possibilities. Though Bhagirathi Kumar postpones his journey for a day to fulfil his desires and Saradei is shown to be enamoured of the young prince, the scene leads nowhere and its significance is finally lost upon the reader. But this brings out the qualities of Saradei as an image of unfulfilled womanhood. She appears as a tender image of feminine beauty and innocence in the imagination of Ram Chandra Dev. The novelist brings in another important dimension of her character to link her effectively with the poetic atmosphere of the novel: her longing to have a glimpse of Lord Jagannath. Her suffering as a lonely and passionate woman is finally spiritualised by the novelist.

The rest of the characters are treated from the outside. Characters like Taki Khan, Amin Chand, the Queen and Bhagirathi Kumar are only described by the narrative voice and some of them degenerate into caricatures. The novelist seeks to present a portrait of the popular life through a host of ordinary characters, too.

But even, here, the method is more poetic than dramatic. The author seems to depend too much on descriptions which sum up the situations and experiences of the character for the reader. This results in monotony and a certain decline in the scope of the novel. A historical novel with such a grand design cannot be supported by flat narration alone. It should be able to convey a sense of the multiplicity of the levels of life through varied levels of idiom. A proper balance between description and dramatic dialogue has not been achieved in the novel and the novelist is all the time trying to secure poetic effect through brilliant use of images and symbols rather than dramatising certain lives in the context of history.

The novelist is interested in depicting collective helplessness and political anarchy and oppression. This experience is presented against three backdrops : the road, the village and the temple. But here, again, only those aspects of the popular life which are directly connected with Lord Jagannath are revealed, and the other aspects are only lightly touched upon. The setting of the road almost invariably brings in references to the pilgrims and their yearning for a glimpse of the image of Lord Jagannath, the novelist casually deals with a few examples of their suffering on account of brigandage of Muslim soldiers and in such cases he is more interested in creating horror-effect by manipulating conventional descriptions of corpses devoured by vultures and jackals.

But the road also takes on an image that suggests an aimless journey not merely of a King, but of a whole community, into the unknown. As an image it is quite evocative, but it fails to dramatise the crisis in the popular life of the time. This predilection for a poetic image or for sensationalism rather than for action is also manifest in scenes dealing with the life of the villagers.

Mohanty seems to be obsessed by the image of a mass of helpless people watching silently the decay of their own culture. This may be the reason why the protrayal of village life in the novel is so very hazy and undistinguished—one hears a great deal about the village life without experiencing it intimately. The villagers' longing to have a glimpse of the lord, again, is the predominant strain in this description. There is however, at least one potentially dramatic protrayal of the village life in the novel, the demolition of the temple of the village deity in Chapter-2 of the fourth section : the Muslims destroy the Dadhibaman temple and the villagers stand watching the spectacle helplessly. Suddenly arrows are showered on the vandals from the bushes and their leader dies on the spot. The villagers flee to the forest in panic. But the scene is not so much important for its portrayal of the helplessness of the masses as for its emphasis on the role of Ram Chandra Dev as the defender of their religion, One has merely to compare it with a similar scene in *Lachhama* to discern the absence of dramatic impact here. Jaga Fateh Singh's mother raises a false alarm and the villagers flee to the forest to save themselves from a supposed Marhatta attack. The relation of this event to the action of the novel, the character of Jaga Fateh Singh's mother and the sympathetic yet detached narrative voice combine to give a powerful sense of trauma in popular life which Mohanty's novel nowhere captures with similar precision and power.

It would be unfair to say that Surendra Mohanty has completely failed in dramatising the crisis in popular life. Certain scenes and incidents within the temple itself indicate his abilities to recreate through dramatic situations and convincingly drawn characters the apathy and callousness which characterised the decadent Oriya culture. There are moments in the novel in which some minor characters come to life and embody the experience

of the historical moment. Amin Chand is shown engaged in a plot to foment trouble at the time of the car-festival so that the King would not be able to gain popular acceptance as the representative of Lord Jagannath. He has bribed Sendha Suara a priest of the Jagannath temple, to execute his plan. The novelist shown Sendha Suara sleeping in a dingy room, in a state of intoxication and stupor, utterly indifferent to his duties. Sendha shows the same unconcern when his attemt to disturb the schedule of the festival fails and he runs after pilgrims to collect his share of their offerings The vividness with which the novelist captures through this figure the decadence that was so sapping the vitality of Oriya society during the 18th century is striking. It communicates more than what so many images and lyrical pieces of landscape description else where achieve in the novel. However, such moments are rare.

It has already been pointed out that most of the novel consist of descriptive reminiscent, reflective narration. There is a lamentable dearth of direct engagement in action on the part of the characters, and novel, in the final analysis might appear to be more reportage than drama. This excessive reliance on description gives an undesirable predominance to its narrative voice. It describes characters, sums up their psychological experiences, creates a poetic atmosphere, and presents the historical details and legends. In trying to achieve so many effects it fails to maintain the restraint necessary for the narrative voice of a historical novel. Its lack of objectivity can be seen in its description of Lord Jagannath. When it sums up the reflections of Ram Chandra Dev the ecstatic description of the greatness of Lord Jagannath are acceptable because they help illuminate the mind of the Protagonist. But, at many other places the narrative voice indulges in mystical high-flights and reveals an intention on the part of the author to exploit the devotion of the Oriya

people for Lord Jagannath. Thus the image of Lord Jagannath in the novel becomes problematic. It is difficult to decide whether he should be treated as the object of a purely political strategy or a reality outside time which controls the processes of history. In fact, at one point in the novel, the narrative voice waxes lyrical and asserts that Ram Chandra Dev may be rejected by history as a failure, as a weak and pathetic creature, but he will earn the glory of being vindicated by the Lord of the Universe, who is above history. In Fakirmohan, cosmic time is only vaguely hinted at. The changes in the time-bound world are incisively explored and dramatised. But here, the narrative voice frequently dismisses the world of political conflict as illusory. This tendency to spiritualise history may be a reason why the novel ultimately fails to achieve a dynamic structure.

The narrative voice is also very much disgressive in character. The author seems to be competing with the historian in presenting facts of the past. The long chapters which deal with the antecedents of characters, institutions and events are too long and are not immediately relevant to the action of the novel. The family background of the characters are often tiresome and redundant. The author dwells upon the daily activities in Jagannath temple for a long time, but to no visible purpose. The references to the history of Orissa, the intrigues that led to the decline of the Gajapati rule in Orissa have not been assimilated into the structure of the novel. Large chunks of routine historical information in the novel could be easily lifted out without any serious damage being done to its basic structure. One feels that a more compact and precise version of the novel would have been much more effective.

The narrative voice is strained to elaborate on the inner conflicts of characters—this is one way in which

Mohanty seeks to make up for the deficiency resulting from a paucity of sufficient dramatic dialogues in the novel. But he merely succeeds in offering statements on psychological experiences of different characters and presenting the summary to the reader with some of his own comments casually thrown in. This robs the novel of the impact of variety and immediacy. Mohanty's language is energetic and dignified but he seems to be using the same style everywhere in the novel. This results in monotony and also effects the quality of its vision. The same expressions recur while describing a certain character or situation in the novel. Fot instance, Saradei always remembers the scene when on hearing the call of war her father-in-law leapt out excitedly sword in hand and exhorted his children to join the war. Similarly whenever Rama-Chandra Dev remembers Saradei, her eyes are compared to with red petals of blue lily. The narrative voice also narrows down the scope of psychological experiences of different characters by stressing only one aspect of their consciousness : their emotional link with Lord Jagannath. Thus all the psychological conflicts in Rama-Chandra Dev's mind boil down to his anguish at his separation from Lord Jagannath. And yet the narrative voice is sometimes remarkably successful in delineating certain characters—the case of Benu Bhramarbar is illustrative. The reason, for this partial success may be that he is the only character in the novel whose interest is purely political. One reason why his portrayal appears convincing is that the novelist did not have the scope to launch upon some extended lyrical descriptions in his context. There is a clear delineation of his motives, and his character is brought out through clearly defined events and concrete details of experience rather than through long passages of meditation.

A major achievement of the narrative voice consists in the creation of a poetic atmosphere in the novel. The

shift from action to images and symbols in the novel has been discussed earlier. The narrative voice itself concentrates upon a period of decay and seeks to create a powerful poetic image of this decay through description of landscape and the symbol of Lord Jagannath. The whole novel, from this point of view, may be a poem expressing the anguish of a helpless people alienated from their God, with nothing historical about it. The sense of decay is sought to be expressed through a richly evocative body of stylised images withered trees, the eric rustling of the casuriana leaves, the valtures descending upon the corpse of a piligrims, desolate roads storms and so on. The landscape in a sense is made to participate in this national tragedy or to act as an objective equivalent. At the same time, it must be pointed out that the images do not add up to anything greater an oppressive experience of decay. They have a limited orientation. They do not grow into a vision of history or flash out some profound insights into the nature of historical reality. The 'sky' in *War and Peace* and 'wilderness' in Cooper's *Leatherstocking Sage* are designed to communicate particular visions. They are not merely a part of the setting. But it seems, images in *Nila Shaila* are part of a desolate and melodramatic background against which the action of the novel would unfold.

The world of *Nila Shaila* is clearly divided into two spheres : the sphere of history which is full of war, intrigues and ambition and the sphere of spiritual experience which is presented as timeless. Within the sphere of history itself, fact and fiction have a co-presence. But it is obvious that Surendra Mohanty uses fictional characters and situations in the novel as symbols of the deeper experience of a period of decadence in the history of Orissa. Our discussions of characterisation in *Nila Shaila* shows how Mohanty fails in this attempt. The facts of history as they are presented in the novel are

more or less accurate but here, too, Mohanty seems to have over-stressed the necessity for historical accuracy. While presenting bare facts of history he expresses a confidence which is unwarranted and assumes the tone and mannerism of an official historian. This aspect of the novel has not gone unnoticed by the contemporary historians of Orissa and they have taken the author to task.[1] The sphere of spiritual experience embraces the alienation of Rama Chandra Dev and the people of Orissa from Lord Jagannath. By glossing over the political realities of this crisis Mohanty makes this separation appear to be a distressing spiritual experience. He clearly mentions in the novel that this sphere is above history and embodies a timeless, spaceless experience. The sphere of history, therefore, is reduced to a mere platform on which a timeless drama of spiritual experience is acted out.

1. Paramanand Acharya, Aitihasika Prati Aupanyasikanka Akshyep. The Jhankar, May, 1972, P. 197—202

CONCLUSION

Thus, it may be seen that, for all their dissimilarities of creative vision and style, the Oriya historical novels reveal an identical pattern in respect of fact-fiction integration. No doubt, as one passes from *Padmamali* to later Oriya historical novels, one observes the emphasis of the Oriya novelist undergoing certain changes: but the problem of reconciling the demands of history and imagination remains largely unresolved. On certain crucial issues that are specific to the genere of historical novel, therefore, the history of Oriya novel does not exhibit much progress. Rather it displays a certain circularity of movement, with Fakirmohan occupying the most significant mid-point in the cycle.

As has been seen, the writer's main concern in *Padmamali* is to properly organise a set of historically true events into the purely fictive world of romance. The novelist is seen visibly labouring under the constraints imposed upon him by an age which is becoming increasingly pragmatic and in which it is difficult to unself consciously.create a wholly fictional world. The opposition is, therefore, primarily between historical fact and artistic illusion. The problem takes on a new dimension in *Bibasini*. Here the novelist is faced with the problem of reconciling truth with morality, not so much with that of synthesising reality and imagination. The author is overtly didactic and wants the events to illustrate a moral. But an honest concern with historical facts as he knows them, he realises, will certainly not help project a morally satisfying order. The looseness of its structure may partly be explained by the author's failure to reconcile the demands of history and poetic justice.

Fakirmohan's *Lachhama* marks a point of departure by making a creative interpenetration between history and fiction possible in the novel. Like *Padmamali* and *Bibasini* which precede it, it is designed as a historical romance, but its seriousness of purpose renders it markedly different from the other novels. It also shows an entirely diffent orientation of the historical romance form : it conceives of facts of history as aspects of a process. In *Lachhama* history is broadly projected as a process of growth and decline of a whole culture. Further, it sees this process as a continuous one. For the first time in the tradition of Oriya novel, a definite concept of history may be seen to emerge from the interaction of characters and incidents in a novel. The novel is so designed as to offer an intuition into the nature of the historical process itself. This, however, is not the same as the concept of history we find embodied in the classical European historical novels. As has been seen, there is a fundamental difference between Fakirmohan and western historical novelists in their concept of time—a difference that goes to suggest the fundamental dissimilarities in the world-views associated with the two cultural traditions.

Lachhama constitutes an unique crystalisation of the historical novel-form in the Oriya tradition. Whereas *Lachhama* seeks to study the past as objectively and dispassionately as possible, and to trace its vital links with the present, the spate of novels dealing with the past which followed it are inspired by a keen nationalistic ardour and, therefore, go to history with a trade-predetermined interest. They present a glorified image of the national past and concentrate on evoking deep nostaligia for a bygone heroic age. The writers of this kind of historical romances—Rama Chandra, Dayanidhi, and others use the novel-form as a medium to teach history. But in their eagerness to glorify the past they do not seem to stress the need for accuracy

of the historical details presented in their works. This may be contrasted with the 19th century tradition of the historical novel in England in which, as Simmons has so convincingly pointed out, the central concern of imparting lessons in history kept the historical romance as a respectable form till its untenability towards the end of the century caused its sharp decline. The Victorian historical novelist evinced—both in the hayday and decline of the form a consistent regard for the facts of history as they were authoritatively known. Indeed, writing a historical novel came to acquire a forbidding dimension because of the novelist was expected to have a respectable scholarship on the subject he wished to handle. In the Oriya tradition however, the use of only authentic, established facts of history did not constitute a primary obligation of the historical novelist. It was enough if the novelist exhibited some regarded for fact in a general way.

The problem of resolving the dichotomy between fact and fiction reappears in the attempt of a maior Oriya novelist to write a historical novel in the late Sixties. This attempt implies that preoccupation with the past in the traditional 19th century manner continues to be au aspect of Oriya consciousness. Yet, through nearly a century of ardent exploration of the historical novel form, neither the Oriya novelist nor the Oriya critic seem to have made much advance.

Writting in 1966, Surendra Mohanty in his *Nila Shaila* is seen to be struggling with the intriguing relation between history and the novel-form. If Umesh Chandra Sarkar sought to reduce history to an appendage of a romantic tale in *Padmamali*, Surendra Mohanty used history as merely a gripping background for dramatising the protagonist's anguished search for political security and spiritual assurance. History as a process which gives classical historical novelists their, theme and structure does not appear in this novel which

therefore, remains essentially enclosed by the same conventional mould that we have seen in Sarakar or Ram Shankar.

The most exciting feature of the novel consists in its a historical, broad human element for which history does not contribute any new dimensions of value or meaning. This inability to structure some profound vision of reality on certain given historical data and consequent tendency to turn away from the directly historical matter and concentrate on some broad emotional patterns in stead, could be explained with reference to the state of Oriya culture in course of the last century. It has already been shown that Oriya culture has not been able to develop a historical conception of life largely because its break with tradition has never been complete : a tradition which rooted in certain perspectives that are cosmic and timeless in quality. In modern times, therefore, Oriya culture has tried to accommodate widely various—even conflicting values. In Europe, on the other hand, a radical break with a similar tradition was responsible for the growth of historical consciousness. In the Orissan context, rather, in the Indian context as a whole this process of accommodation has hindered the evolution of a sense of history. History therefore, has never replaced 'fate' as it did in the European context in the 19th century.

But it must be admitted that within the European tradition, too, the problem of reconciling fact with fiction was a real one for the historical novelist and for the critic of the historical novel. A number of minor writers of historical fiction and a group of critics believed—and still believe—that the function of the historical novel consists in vivifying history. History and fiction belong two separate worlds and the former is to be explored by systematic research while the later is the product of the freeplay of man's creative mind. One

should merely be used to serve the other's end. The view of Helen Cam, a modern commentator of the historical novel may be illustrative of this attitude :

> The function, then, of the histrotical novelist is to awaken the incurious, especially the young, to interest in the past, widening the horizons of all and enticing a minority to serious study. . . . . It can enlarge the sympathies by compelling the reader to see the abstract generalisations, whether political, social or economic, in terms of the human individual. The historical novelist, has resources . . . . . . from which the scientific historian is debarred. He may fill in the lamentable hiatuses with his own inventions. But he must keep the rules. His inventions must not be incompatible with the established facts of history. The novel that can do all this is a good historical novel.[1]

Thus, for Cam, the historical novel is any novel which seeks to enliven the dry facts of history and its purpose is confined to awakening interest in the past. Such a definition is clearly based on a very limited understanding of the nature and achievement of the classical historical novels of Scott or Tolstoy. But, this certainly holds good for a large number of novels which passed for historical novels both in Europe and India. For instance most of the attempt at writing historical novels in the early decades of the 20th century in Orissa bear Cam's definiation out.

The great, fully realised historical novels, however, have sought to achieve something much more significant. They are primarily concerned with rendering a sense of the historical process. History is not understood as a

1. Helen Cam, Historical Novels, Historical Association, London, 1961; p—19.

body of facts established through independent research of scholars but as an all embracing process as a vision of reality as dynamic flux. Therefore, it is not merely a part of the novel's content. In a successful historical novel the element of structure and characterisation, too, are informed by this perspective. One may consider A. Fleishman's formulation on the nature and function of historical novel.

> The historical novelist writes trans-temporally: he is rooted in the history of his own time and yet can conceive another. In ranging back into history he discovers not merely his own origins but his historicity, his existence as a historical being. What makes a historical novel historical is the active presence of a concept of history as a shaping force—acting not only upon the character in the novel but on the author and readers outside it. In the course of reading, we find that the protagonists of such novels confront not only the forces of history in their own time but its impact on life in any time. The universal conception of the individual's career as fate becomes symbolised not by the goods but by history. In several of its greatest examples, the historical novel attains the status of a modern epic in its view of the tragic comic possibilities of man's historical life.[1]

It has been the purpose of this study to emphasise such a significant structure of meaning as being of the essence of the historical novel form. This is the direction which great historical novels of the past have highlighted and in which the genre of historical novel has to find its proper consummation.

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1. Avrom Fleishman, The English Historical Novel, Walter Scott to Virginia Woolf, London, 1971, p—15

It is clear that Oriya historical novels have very rarely been able to project such a conception of history through their characters and situations. The pattern discovered here in the evolution of the historical novel in Oriya seems to hold good in respect of other Indian literatures as well. This is only to be expected considering the operation of identical compulsions on the author of the other Indian languages. Modern Indian society has not yet developed a historical conception of life although it has been adequately exposed to the forces of change. Interest in the past continues to be inspired by nationalism and not by a need explore the nature of reality and change. This explains the self-consciousness at the heart of the historical novels written in Oriya and the tendency to ground fiction on historical facts.

In conclusion, it may be observed that historical novel has not exhausted its possibilities in the Indian context as it appears to have done in Europe, where the concept of reality itself has undergone fundamental changes not merely at the level of linguistics or philosophy, but at the broad cultural level. Presumably, the primary impulse to romantic—realistic exploration of the past may not be available in Europe today as intensely as it is still to be encountered in the Indian society. Therefore, the form continues to challenge creative writers of the future to explore reality, both past and present, more acutely and give it a more profound artistic statement.

